United Nations A/67/PV.17

General Assembly
Sixty-seventh session

Official Records

17th plenary meeting
Friday, 28 September 2012, 6 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Jeremić ..... (Serbia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Balé (Congo), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 6.35 p.m.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Carl Bildt, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden.

Mr. Bildt (Sweden): Our world is changing rapidly. The black-and-white photos that were taken when this Organization was created back in 1945 are truly testimonies from another era. That was a time when computers had barely been invented. The Internet was decades away. And it was not always easy for the representatives at that founding conference in San Francisco to establish contact with their faraway capitals for instructions that might be needed.

These days, we have instant access to the global information network. Tweets are being written as I speak. There are more connected devices than there are people in the world, and development is accelerating in every respect. In 2012, we who are gathered here have all become representatives of the connected nations of the world. But, connectivity also carries risks, as we saw recently in our interconnected financial system,

Recently, we also all followed with horror and disbelief the fact that an odious film clip posted somewhere on YouTube could lead to outrage and deadly violence 10,000 miles away. But the opportunities created by connectivity are vastly more important than the risks. Globalization, marked by more open societies in a more open world and facilitated by the enormous advances of science and technology, has been an incredible force for good. Mobile banking brings financial services to East Africans. Skype reinforces messages from the Arab street. Virtual marketplaces unleash entrepreneurial talent. More contact, more movement and more trade — a more open world — have already lifted hundreds of millions of people out of poverty and despair, and more is certain to come.

In this world of connected nations, people around the globe, including tens of thousands of Swedes of Syrian origin, are following the tragedy unfolding in Damascus, Aleppo and Homs with intense concern. We have all been reminded of a simple truth — violence is easy to start but very difficult to stop. What began as a popular protest has now turned into a civil war, which, if unchecked, brings the risk of sectarian fragmentation across the wider region. We must do everything possible to prevent that from happening. We call on the divided Security Council to put global responsibilities above narrow national interests. In the strongest possible terms, we urge the Al-Assad regime to stop killing its own people and start respecting its obligations as a Member of the United Nations. And we remind those responsible for deadly violence and abuse that they should rest assured that they will be held accountable one day.

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There is no alternative to a political solution. Together with our European partners, we offer our full support to the Joint Special Representative, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi. Syria is a society that is rich in culture, history and traditions. Damascus is one of the oldest continually inhabited cities in our world. To preserve and protect the mosaic that Syria represents is vital to its future, and, I would argue, to all of our futures.

But we must also help those now so tragically affected by what is happening. A thousand people are being killed every week, according to the latest reports we are receiving. We are witnessing an enormous human tragedy. More than 2.5 million people are in need of humanitarian help. More than a million people have been displaced inside Syria, and there are a quarter of a million refugees in the region as a direct consequence of the current crisis. The regime must give unhindered access for assistance to the displaced and suffering, and the countries that have generously opened their borders should be commended and supported. Sweden, which is one of the world's largest humanitarian donors, has contributed massively, and we stand ready to further increase our support here and elsewhere around the world where people in need are suffering.

In this world of connected nations, the human rights of every child, woman and man are a matter of concern for us all. Protecting and promoting human rights is one of the central duties of the international community. Not only is that a question of protecting individual human beings — their life, their freedom, their future — but it is also crucial to promoting peace, stability and prosperity around the globe. And critical to those efforts is working for gender equality and the empowerment of women, because it is right, because it is smart and because it is fundamental to realizing the economic and political potential of society.

Sweden, the largest financial contributor to the work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights today, is a candidate for a seat on the Human Rights Council for the period 2013-2015. As a Council member, Sweden would be an active and reliable partner. We would work with everyone who shares our conviction, reach out to those who disagree and support those who need it. But in that area as well, we must adjust to the world of connectivity. The human rights and fundamental freedoms enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights must apply in the modern world of today. Sweden will take every opportunity to champion freedom of expression online and the immense development potential that is vested in the Internet and all of the new communication technologies. Earlier this year, the Human Rights Council decided that the rights that apply offline apply online as well, and called on all States to promote and facilitate access to the Internet. That landmark resolution (Human Rights Council resolution 20/8) was unanimously adopted in Geneva, and I hope that it has been duly noted here in New York as well. The fight for freedom on the Internet is the new front line in the fight for freedom in the world.

In this world of connected nations, we share a planet with common development challenges. The world's poor — indeed, all of us — need development that is inclusive, equitable and sustainable. The international community has met three of the Millennium Development Goals well ahead of time, but we are lagging significantly behind in others. And while we accelerate efforts to reduce child mortality and improve maternal health, we have started to look beyond the immediate future. Sweden welcomes the high-level panel on the post-2015 development agenda and looks forward to contributing to its recommendations.

In Rio, world leaders recently launched a process for working towards sustainable development goals. It is up to all of us to take that agenda forward: to involve scientists and business, to explore the potential of information and communications technology and innovation, to pursue all three dimensions of sustainable development and to ensure that democracy and human rights are part of the equation. And as an active partner and a major donor, Sweden will certainly do its part.

In this world of connected nations, geography is sometimes of little consequence. Distances might at times seem enormous. But the melting Arctic ice cap in the North can pose an existential threat to small island States in the South. The Arctic today is warming twice as fast as the global average. And right now as we gather here, the Arctic Sea ice cover has receded so much that it has reached a new historical minimum. There is less ice this autumn in the Arctic than ever before in recorded history.

The impact of climate change is global. The world is not on track for keeping the increase in global average temperatures to below two degrees Celsius. We therefore urgently need progress in the negotiations under the United Nations Framework Convention on

Climate Change and effective implementation of the globally agreed outcomes. Sweden calls on everyone in this Hall to do their utmost to contribute to ensuring that that occurs, and developed nations should take the lead.

There are severe challenges, but there are also great opportunities. Technology brings new possibilities — to reduce emissions, increase growth, and move towards a truly sustainable future. As the current Chair of the Arctic Council — comprising the eight nations whose landmass extends beyond the Arctic Circle — Sweden will make its contribution. Together, we will set an example of positive cooperation in an area drawing rapidly increasing global attention and where, not long ago, many were predicting competition and conflict.

We live in a new era. What happens in the Levant, the Arctic or elsewhere has immediate implications for us all. In order to deal with the challenges of this era, the connected nations of this world need a strong United Nations — a United Nations to discuss the issues of today and to truly seize the opportunities for collective action in order to shape a better tomorrow; a United Nations where we convene in these days to say that, while ridiculing what by others is held sacred is mean and offensive, it can never be used as an excuse for violence, destruction and death.

But the United Nations — our United Nations — needs to step up to the challenge. The Security Council must assume its responsibilities, in Syria and elsewhere. Member States must empower the United Nations to become better at conflict prevention and peacebuilding, and ensure that it can deliver development results effectively and as one.

It is up to us, the Member States, to meet our international human rights obligations, not just in order to protect the individual human being, but because respect for human rights is also, as we have bitterly learned throughout history, critical to peace and security.

In these times of accelerating global change, with its great risks and even greater opportunities, Sweden will remain a steadfast member of this global Organization and, together with our partners in the European Union, we will continue to promote an effective multilateral system with the United Nations at its core.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Highness Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Emirates.

Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate Mr. Vuk Jeremić on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. I am confident that his experience in international affairs will enable him to guide the work of this session wisely and ably, and I wish him every success in his task.

I would also like to commend his predecessor, Ambassador Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, for his successful and prudent leadership of the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly, and to commend the great efforts made by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and pay tribute to his tireless efforts and the role of this international Organization in promoting international peace, security and development.

Security and stability in the Arab Gulf region are a high priority for all of us. Our balanced policies are based on the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the provisions of international law, especially those calling for peaceful coexistence, confidence-building, good neighbourliness, mutual respect, non-interference in the internal affairs of other States, and pursuing peaceful means in resolving conflicts and disputes.

On the basis of those principles, my Government expresses, once again, its regret regarding the continued Iranian occupation of our three islands: Abu Musa, Greater Tunb and Lesser Tunb. We demand the restoration of the United Arab Emirates' full sovereignty over those islands. We emphasize that all actions and measures taken by Iran are null and void, and are in contravention of international law and all norms and universal human values.

The events unfolding in Syria are for us a cause for great sadness. They have gone beyond all limits and norms. The United Arab Emirates is closely, and with great concern, following the policies of violence, killing, displacement and expulsion being pursued by the Syrian regime against its people, which regime has lost all its legitimacy. We therefore call upon the international community to consider with seriousness and firmness what is happening to our Syrian brothers and to shoulder its humanitarian responsibilities. We see it as our duty to stop those atrocities against the peaceful Syrian people. We are convinced that a

solution to the crisis can be achieved only through an orderly transition of power.

That severe humanitarian crisis requires us to support the people of Syria, in particular the refugees. The United Arab Emirates has shouldered its responsibilities and obligations towards the Syrian refugees in Turkey and Jordan and will continue to do so by providing relief. We urge all States to contribute to such humanitarian efforts.

The Middle East holds great importance for us, and we believe that peace and stability will never be achieved in that region until the Arab-Israeli conflict is resolved. That is the central and vital issue to the people of the entire region, and reaching a just solution is the key for bringing peace and stability to the whole area. It cannot be realized without putting an end to the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian and Arab territories through Israel's withdrawal to the lines of 4 June 1967, including from East Jerusalem, the occupied Syrian Golan Heights and the remaining occupied Lebanese territories. The achievement of a just and comprehensive peace must be carried out in accordance with resolutions of international legitimacy, the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The United Arab Emirates welcomes the considerable progress achieved in the political process in Somalia through the completion of the transitional phase, the convening of the Constituent Assembly, the adoption of the Constitution of Somalia and the election of Mr. Hassan Sheikh Mohamud as the new President of Somalia. We also reaffirm our support for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of Somalia, and look forward to working with its Government towards achieving security and stability and countering piracy in a region of such vital importance, not only with respect to oil and gas transport but also to the world economy in general.

In the United Arab Emirates, we remain committed to supporting the security and stability of Afghanistan and confirm the continuation of our humanitarian and developmental support to that distressed country. In that context, we welcome the outcome of the donors conference that was held in Tokyo, with the hope that the pledges announced at the conference will contribute to the process of the reconstruction of Afghanistan. As we approach the year 2014 and the commitment for military withdrawal from Afghanistan and for turning the country over to its people and Government, we aspire to see an Afghanistan that is free from terrorism, extremism and violence.

At the same time, the United Arab Emirates expresses its deep concern over the violence against the Rohingya Muslim community in Myanmar and calls upon the international community to urge the Government of Myanmar to cease all acts incompatible with the principles of fundamental human rights.

We reaffirm our commitment to all requirements of nuclear non-proliferation and renew our support for the efforts aimed at designating the region of the Middle East, including the Arab Gulf region, a zone free of weapons of mass destruction — especially the Arab Gulf region. In that context, we must also call upon Israel to join the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and subject all of its nuclear facilities to the comprehensive safeguards regime.

In that regard, we urge the Islamic Republic of Iran to fully cooperate with the International Atomic Energy Agency in implementing its international commitments in order to dispel all fears and suspicions surrounding its nuclear programme. We look forward to a peaceful solution to that crisis, ensuring that our region remains free of tension and conflict, while guaranteeing the transparency and peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme.

The United Arab Emirates began in 2009 to develop a nuclear energy programme for peaceful uses in order to meet the country's growing demand for energy and to support economic development projects. It ensured that the programme's rules and regulations were based on the highest standards of sustained safety and security measures and principles of nuclear non-proliferation. I take the opportunity to call upon the States of the region to draw on the experience of the United Arab Emirates in that field and to study the standards of transparency, technology, safety and security upon which the programme is based.

We would like to emphasize the importance of addressing the implications of climate change, which involves developing renewable energy technologies to achieve sustainable development and providing clean energy for developing countries, which are among the goals advocated by the United Arab Emirates in offering various types of humanitarian and development assistance.

The United Arab Emirates reiterates its firm condemnation of all acts of terrorism, illicit trafficking in drugs and arms and human trafficking, as well as organized crime, which are interlinked phenomena that feed into each other. It reaffirms its resolve to continue cooperating with international and multilateral efforts aiming at the total elimination of those negative phenomena, which pose a direct threat to international peace and security.

The United Arab Emirates has announced the establishment of the International Centre of Excellence for Countering Violent Extremism, in collaboration with several influential friends and actors, which will begin its work in Abu Dhabi at the end of the year. Moderation and tolerance are the basic principles guiding our political orientation and represent lofty values to the citizens of the United Arab Emirates and to society as a whole. In that sense, the United Arab Emirates has been and will remain committed to moderation in its approach, and accepts other communities as part of a diverse world built on mutual respect. Those are the human values that have formed our convictions with regard to many issues, such as counterterrorism, human rights, the empowerment of women and coexistence among peoples and religious sects.

The United Arab Emirates emphasizes the importance of consolidating the values of tolerance, moderation and respect for religions, as well as the importance of protecting religions against defamation and contempt and stresses the need to develop the necessary legislation in that regard. I must condemn, in the strongest possible terms, abuses against Islam, as freedom of expression should not be allowed to undermine any religion or belief, whatsoever. We also condemn all violent reactions to any such abuse.

Terrorism poses a challenge to international peace and security and leads to violating the human rights of ordinary people by depriving them of the right to live in peace and prosperity. In that context and based on our commitment to the principles of human rights, the United Arab Emirates renews its support of international efforts aimed at ensuring peace, security and prosperity for all the peoples of the world, and looks forward to expanding its engagement in that area.

The United Arab Emirates has also been focusing its efforts on reducing gender discrimination. Therefore, we look forward to playing an active role in the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, based on our successful national experience in empowering the women of the United Arab Emirates, who actively participate in managing the affairs of the State as well as the community.

In conclusion, I would like to appeal to all Member States to support the quest of the United Arab Emirates to host World Expo 2020 in Dubai under the slogan "Connecting Minds, Creating the Future". We look forward to receiving the support necessary to strengthen my country's candidacy, particularly since it is the first time that the event will be held in the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia region.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. José Badia, Minister for External Relations and for Economic Affairs and International Finances of the Principality of Monaco.

Mr. Badia (Monaco) (*spoke in French*): The Secretary-General has shared with us the priorities that he plans to implement during the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly. His warning concerning the multiplicity of new threats and his clear-sighted recognition of their interconnections should inspire and guide our work.

The maintenance of international peace and security — need it be said again — are the very essence of the mission of our Organization. What do we see before us? Crises and threats to peace and security are multiplying and are often even mutually reinforcing, along with the endangerment of human rights. What global vision do we share of the challenges that confront our planet, its States and its peoples? By bearing in mind that it is our mission and urgent need to uphold our vision, which calls on us to support the five priorities of the programme of action that have been drawn up for the next five years and submitted to us by the Secretary-General. Since he has invited us to so, we wish to underline the need to prioritize the strengthening of the United Nations system as well as the development of partnerships in all areas of its activity.

The President rightly sought to focus the general debate of this session on the subject of the peaceful settlement of international situations and disputes. This historic debate, launched at the beginning of the week by the General Assembly, has shown that respect for the rule of law, at both the national and the international levels, is indispensable for the establishment of responsible societies that are able to promote

cooperation and ensure the well-being of their citizens. Recent history leads us to take a serious look at the current difficulties confronting the world. While last year we welcomed the magnificent spark of democracy that was kindled in the Arab world, it is intolerable now that minority factions and extremists are threatening the hopes and dampening the expectations of people who aspire to live in liberty.

The Government of the Principality of Monaco echoes those who have condemned the acts of violence perpetrated both by the authorities and by opposition groups in the Syrian Arab Republic, where the situation only continues to deteriorate. I would also like to convey my full support for the efforts made by the International Committee of the Red Cross and its resolve in seeking to ensure that humanitarian needs are met. Clearly, that is involves ensuring that each and every one respect the rule of international humanitarian law as the minimum requirement for meeting the basic, elementary moral standards of our peoples, standards that do not, unfortunately, seem to be shared by all.

We are equally concerned by the recent events in the Sahel region, including in Mali, which are growing worse. The Principality of Monaco, which is involved in various humanitarian efforts in the region, supports all such actions by the international community, given the urgency and gravity of the situation. We will support a strategy established by the United Nations that can address the issues of security, governance, development, human rights and humanitarian aspects. The values that we are committed to uphold in adopting the Charter of the United Nations are based on our common humanity and on the recognition of our differences, which are at the very core of our humanity.

Allow me, in that regard, to pay tribute to all those who have been committed to serving those values on the ground, often paying with their lives. They seek to uphold the aims and principles that bring us together here in this forum. Our authorities have resolutely condemned all attacks perpetrated against diplomatic and consular missions and personnel. We must all ensure the obligation of guaranteeing their protection in all circumstances.

At a time when the world is facing worrying developments, the theme that the President has selected for this session of the General Assembly merits the unanimous support of all in our community. Aware of the challenges, I would like to take the opportunity to commend Mr. Vuk Jeremić, President of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session, on his election and to assure the Assembly of my delegation's full support.

More than ever before, we need to resort to the peaceful settlement of our disputes and seek to prevent rather than react to events. In the 1950s, Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld urged us to be mindful of the need to respond at an early stage to crises in order to avoid the outbreak of disputes between parties or the conflagration of a dispute into an open conflict, or in the event that a conflict does break out, to ensure that it can be contained.

We have been caught unaware and so many ongoing problems in the year 2012 have gone unsolved. We have been largely successful in ensuring that international law prevails over the right to wage war. However, the involvement of our Organization in conflict prevention still falls quite short, as avowals and statements of intent on their own are insufficient. It is therefore our common duty to strengthen understanding, tolerance and mutual respect. As was recalled by the Secretary-General here on 13 September, as well as by his predecessor, one of the strongest factors for conflict prevention, and thus for the inculcation of an authentic culture of peace, is education. That kind of prevention is aimed at enrolling the young generations to whom we owe a future.

The challenges are manifold. Among them, I would single out the economic and financial crisis, which has affected the overwhelming majority of our States since 2008. We can overcome the crisis, creating employment while protecting our environmental heritage. But in order to do so, we need an ambitious long-term vision, and that is why, in spite of the budget cuts, the crisis has compelled us to realize that we cannot afford to lose sight of the Millennium Development Goals — elimination of poverty and hunger; education; child and maternal health; and combatting pandemics, including HIV/AIDS and malaria, which sap humankind of its strength — which must remain uppermost on our agenda.

The upcoming deadline must encourage us to do still more to intensify our efforts in order to ensure their achievement. In 2015, we will adopt a new programme of action, based on the results achieved and on the new challenges to be met.

In his address to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, His Serene Highness Prince

Albert II of the Principality of Monaco welcomed the fact that we are progressing towards a shared definition of sustainable development goals. Those goals will frame our actions at the international, national and local levels, and in turn, that will make the implementation of our commitments more effective and more transparent.

One of those objectives should emphasize the sustainable development of oceans and on the importance of the blue economy.

That objective should concern all sectors that depend on ocean resources and maritime areas. It is urgent that that objective be comprehensive and sustainable so that those sectors can continue to benefit from economic, social and environmental services. Accordingly, our delegation will support all initiatives seeking to improve the coordination and effectiveness of the United Nations work in the oceans. Indeed, we believe that that is the right path to follow in order to ultimately ensure the sustainable use and management of the oceans and thereby their conservation.

The fate of future generations lies in our hands. For that reason, we are obliged to ensure that the Doha Climate Change Conference is a success. It is therefore crucial that we reach agreement on the establishment of a second period of commitments under the Kyoto Protocol. We therefore commit ourselves to working positively and effectively in the negotiations on reaching a new global post-2020 climate agreement, taking into account the needs of the most vulnerable.

His Serene Highness Prince Albert II welcomes the celebration next year of the twentieth anniversary of Monaco's joining the United Nations as a Member State. In that connection, Monaco wishes to express its resolve to contribute to the further strengthening of our Organization to the extent that a small State can do so. Members may rest assured that the Principality welcomes the Assembly's two-fold intention of further involving itself in the field of development and establishing an advisory framework that seeks to enhance the cooperation between the General Assembly and international financial institutions.

On the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the Forum of Small States, of which Monaco is a member, and also in its capacity as a member of the Global Governance Group, the Principality intends to play its full role in the work of those bodies. The magnitude of the challenges and crises that we all face have shown that the size of a State is not the deciding factor when it comes to resolving such problems. Rather, it is solely our ability to work together and cooperate that enables us to respond to everyday needs and that will lead us on the path towards international peace and security.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Abdulaziz Kamilov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Mr. Kamilov (Uzbekistan): Allow me very briefly to address what are, in our opinion, some of the most important items on the agenda of this session of the General Assembly. First of all, today, in this century of globalization and rapidly changing situations and growing tensions and confrontations in many regions of the world, we need to come up with unconventional and extraordinary responses to crisis situations and wars that have been ongoing for many decades and are therefore persistent features of our agenda.

To our great regret, instead of seeking to deeply understand emerging problems and confrontations in one region of the world or another and addressing them in a timely manner, finding their true origins or focusing the international community on preventing them from growing into large-scale crises and wars, the world is letting its most precious resource — time — slip through its fingers. That leads, of course, to enormous costs and the waste of other precious resources. Let me offer a few examples.

As early as in 1993, President Karimov of the Republic of Uzbekistan, when he spoke before the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly (see A/48/PV.6), drew the international community's attention to the need to immediately resolve the situation in Afghanistan, given the close connection between regional and global security, the need to respect the civil and religious rights of the people of Afghanistan and the need to prevent the conflict from growing into a full-scale civil war. Otherwise the problems in Afghanistan would turn into a painful and bitter issue of concern to the international community as a whole. Difficult problems may resurface when the imminent withdrawal of the International Security Assistance Forces from Afghanistan occurs by late 2014 and the responsibility for ensuring stability in the country is turned over to the newly created Afghan National Security Forces. It is obvious today that that turn of events may lead to a stand-off between opposing forces in Afghanistan itself and in neighbouring countries. It may also lead to the growth of extremism and radicalism, cause a surge in

drug trafficking and aggravate tensions in the region as whole.

As the situation is unfolding, the best way to address the situation in Afghanistan is to establish a contact group under the auspices of the United Nations with the participation of the country's neighbours, the United States, NATO and the Russian Federation. The principal goal of such efforts should be to reach a compromise and an agreement between the opposing forces and form a coalition Government on that basis. Such a coalition Government could be comprised of the core ethnic, national and religious groups involved in the military and political stand-off taking place in Afghanistan.

Uzbekistan has suggested that approach a number of times, for example, at the NATO summits in Bucharest in 2008 and in Chicago this year, as well as at the High-level Plenary Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals held in New York in 2010 (see A/65/PV.3). The Republic of Uzbekistan has always conducted, and will always maintain, a friendly, good-neighbourly policy towards its neighbour Afghanistan. Uzbekistan has built its relationship with Afghanistan on a bilateral basis, taking into account the national interests of both countries and respecting the Afghan people's choice in terms of the future of their country. Today, Uzbekistan offers comprehensive forms of assistance to Afghanistan so that it may return once again to peace. Specifically, we have contributed to the construction of bridges, motorways and the strategic Khairaton-Mazar-e-Sharif railroad link, which connects Afghanistan with the States of Central Asia, as well as providing an uninterrupted supply of electricity to Kabul. Uzbekistan plays a key role in ensuring the stable and effective operation of the northern distribution network.

Secondly, climate change and the global deteriorating ecological situation have made ensuring the reasonable and rational use of water resources the most acute problem of the modern world. Increasing shortages of fresh water, which is needed to provide food security and protect human life, serve to confirm that assertion. In that connection, I would like to present the Republic of Uzbekistan's main approach to addressing those issues, which are of vital importance for all the States of Central Asia.

We believe that all water and energy issues in our region, where the largest transboundary rivers — the Amu Darya and the Syr Darya — are the main sources of water and life for the millions of people residing near them, should be addressed in accordance with the universally recognized norms of international law provided for in the 1992 United Nations Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes and the 1997 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses.

Those instruments require adherence to the principle of doing no harm to the environment or to the interests of neighbouring States when exploiting the resources of transboundary rivers.

It is therefore reasonable that Uzbekistan calls for those principles and standards to be our guides in the search for mutually acceptable compromise decisions on water use. We believe that all hydropower facility construction projects in the upper waters of the Syr Darya and Amu Darya basins should be evaluated by international experts under the auspices of the United Nations and agreed to by the downstream countries. Only after such agreement and coordination should construction begin on two proposed dams, which are practically the largest in the world, namely, the 350-metre-high Rogun hydropower station in the upper waters of the Amu Darya and the 275-metre-high Kambarata 1 station in the upper waters of the Syr Darya. Furthermore, that construction has to be carried out in mountainous terrain where seismicity levels can reach 9 to 10 points on the Richter scale.

To comply with international requirements, it is essential to set priorities for water use. The region's limited water resources must first be used to meet drinking and sanitary needs, and only after that to ensure food security and to meet ecological demands and the needs of the industry and power sectors.

Thirdly, Uzbekistan remains committed to preserving peace, stability and security in the region. That principled position is stipulated in the Republic of Uzbekistan's position paper on foreign policy activity, formulated on the initiative of the Head of State of Uzbekistan. In particular, the document includes the following important provisions.

First, the Republic of Uzbekistan reserves the right to enter into alliances, join commonwealths and other inter-State establishments, as well as to leave them, guided by the supreme interests of the State, the people, their well-being and security, the priority guidelines for

modernizing the country, existing national legislation and international obligations that have been assumed. The paper continues, stating that Uzbekistan maintains a peace-loving policy, does not participate in military-political blocs, and reserves the right to leave any inter-State body if the latter is transformed into a military-political bloc. Next, the Republic of Uzbekistan will take political, economic and other measures to prevent its involvement in military conflicts or hotbeds of tension in adjacent States and will not allow the deployment of foreign bases and facilities on its own territory. Next, the armed forces of the Republic of Uzbekistan will not participate in military operations abroad. Finally, the main priority concern of the foreign policy of Uzbekistan is the region of Central Asia, where the country's crucial interests lie.

The problems of Central Asia must be addressed by the countries of the region without interference from external Powers. Uzbekistan remains committed to pursuing an open, friendly and pragmatic policy towards its immediate neighbours, and proceeds from a position that all outstanding political, economic and ecological problems of the region should be addressed on the basis of the mutual consideration of interests, constructive dialogue and the norms of international law.

We set great store by the United Nations as a universal structure and the only worldwide, universally accepted body capable of ensuring security, stability and consistent development, including in our region. Uzbekistan stands ready to continue to cooperate effectively with the Organization and its specialized bodies in order to achieve those high and noble goals.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Elmar Maharram oglu Mammadyarov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Mr. Mammadyarov (Azerbaijan): At the outset, I would like to congratulate my good friend, Mr. Vuk Jeremić, on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session, and to wish him every success in fulfilling his highly responsible duties. We are also grateful to Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser for presiding ably over the sixty-sixth session.

This is the first general debate that I have addressed since Azerbaijan was elected to a non-permanent seat on the Security Council, and I would like to express our sincere gratitude and profound appreciation to the Governments of States Members of the United Nations for their valuable support for our candidacy and for their solidarity with Azerbaijan during 17 rounds of elections.

The theme of the this year's general debate, "Bringing about adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means", is timely and topical. It also represents a logical continuation of discussions we had during the previous session. Indeed, the peaceful settlement of disputes is one of the key and core principles of international law enshrined in the United Nations Charter. Its true value is to be able to commit States to respecting one another's territorial integrity and political independence, refraining in their international relations from the threat or use of force and resolving their disputes in conformity with international law.

At its sixty-fifth and sixty-sixth sessions, the General Assembly adopted two resolutions on strengthening the role of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention and resolution (resolutions 65/283 and 66/291), and the Secretary-General submitted a report on the subject that contains a Guidance for Effective Mediation (A/66/811, annex I). As a sponsor of those resolutions, Azerbaijan considers the process begun by their adoption to be an essential effort towards reinforcing the promotion of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention and resolution, as well as providing useful guidance to existing and future mediation mechanisms. A crucial factor is that those resolutions, and the Guidance for Effective Mediation developed by the Secretary-General, reaffirmed the key importance of the United Nations Charter and of international law and justice, in particular the commitment to respect and uphold the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of States.

During Azerbaijan's presidency of the Security Council this past May, we organized an Arria-formula meeting of the Council to encourage a frank exchange of views, within a flexible procedural framework, on the role of mediation, judicial settlement and justice in promoting durable peace and reconciliation based on international law. We look forward to further initiatives on the topic in the General Assembly and the Security Council with a view to contributing to the development and implementation of comprehensive peace strategies within specific frameworks that provide that dispute

settlement and conflict resolution must be based on respect for the rule of law and for justice.

The world continues to face persistent, grave and systematic violations of the fundamental norms and principles of international law. There are still instances where archaic patterns of the use of force against the territorial integrity and political independence of States are used to achieve territorial gains. Hundreds of thousands of people throughout the world continue to suffer from aggression, military occupation, ethnic cleansing and a prevailing culture of impunity for the most serious crimes of concern to the international community.

The ongoing armed conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan continues to represent a serious threat and challenge to international and regional peace and security. The conflict has led to the occupation of almost 20 per cent of the territory of Azerbaijan and has turned more than one million people in the country into internally displaced persons or refugees. The war has also led to the deaths and wounding of thousands of Azerbaijanis, including women, the elderly and children. In addition, the aggression against Azerbaijan has severely damaged the country in socioeconomic terms. Not a single Azerbaijani historic or cultural monument has been left undamaged, and no sacred site has escaped desecration in either the occupied territories or in Armenia.

We sincerely believe that there is no alternative to peace, stability and mutually beneficial regional cooperation. As a country suffering from the occupation of its territories and the forcible displacement of hundreds of thousands of its citizens, Azerbaijan is the most interested party in the earliest possible negotiated settlement of the conflict. Without prejudice to its rights under the United Nations Charter, in particular those set forth in Article 51, Azerbaijan embarked on and remains committed to the conflict settlement process, confident that it will lead to the end of the illegal Armenian occupation, ensure the return of forcibly displaced people to their homes and guarantee the peaceful coexistence of the Armenian and Azerbaijani communities in the Nagorno Karabakh region within the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Attempts by the Armenian side to misinterpret the norms and principles of international law and its insistence on unrealistic annexationist claims, which Azerbaijan will never accept, speak to the real intentions of Armenia's leadership and represent an open challenge to the conflict settlement process, as well as a serious threat to international and regional peace and security. In flagrant violation of the United Nations Charter, Armenia continues to use force to maintain its occupation of the Nagorno Karabakh region and seven other districts of Azerbaijan, as well as to prevent internally displaced Azerbaijani persons from returning to their homes. It is attempting to alter the demographic balance in the occupied territories and to remove any signs of their Azerbaijani cultural and historical roots. Additionally, regular ceasefire violations and deliberate attacks by the armed forces of Armenia against the inhabitants of towns and villages in Azerbaijan along the front line and the border between the two States have become more frequent and violent in recent times, resulting in the killing and injuring of many Azerbaijani civilians.

We have no doubt that the Azerbaijani and Armenian communities of Nagorno Karabakh will one day live side by side in peace and dignity in that region of Azerbaijan. It is therefore essential and vital to continue efforts for peace and coexistence between the two communities. Azerbaijan considers that an important part of the whole reconciliation process and has therefore accepted invitations from a number of European non-governmental organizations to hold intercommunal meetings. However, those proposals have so far been blocked by the authorities in Yerevan. Moreover, the aggressive rhetoric of Armenia's leadership and its blatant promotion of odious ideas of racial superiority, ethnic and religious incompatibility and hatred towards Azerbaijan and other neighbouring nations only deepen mistrust and make more elusive the prospect of a speedy negotiated settlement.

The situation is further complicated by Armenia's irresponsible and unacceptable behaviour in the highly sensitive domain of justice and reconciliation. The perpetrators of war crimes and crimes against humanity, including acts of genocide against the Azerbaijani people, not only remain unpunished in Armenia but are even promoted, venerated and officially rewarded with the title of hero. Schools, universities and streets are named after them and monuments are erected in their honour. War criminals who proudly avow their role in the mass killing of Azerbaijani civilians are reincarnated as highly placed politicians, military commanders and public figures.

Armenia must finally realize that the irresponsible and provocative policy of territorial claims, animosity and hatred towards neighbouring countries and nations based on historical, cultural, racial and religious prejudices has no chance of success. The earlier it grasps that fact, the sooner our countries will be able to reach mutual understanding and enjoy peace, stability and cooperation.

It is clear that both the conflict-settlement process and its outcome must be consistent with international law. The achievement of peace, security, stability and confidence therefore depends first and foremost on the removal of the consequences of Armenia's illegal use of force. That will ensure that the occupation of the territories of Azerbaijan is at an end and that the right of internally displaced Azerbaijani persons to return to their homes and recover their property and possessions will be implemented. That is what international law and the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions require, which means that this condition cannot be subject to compromise or used as a bargaining chip in the conflict settlement process. Armenia's implementation of its obligation to withdraw its armed forces from the territory of Azerbaijan and to resolve outstanding issues of State responsibility for acts deemed wrongful under international law cannot be made contingent on addressing the aggressor's unlawful and unacceptable claims.

The fact that the situation has remained unresolved for so long does not speak well for the strength and efficiency of the international organizations that are deaing with the issue. It is obvious that the primary role in the resolution of the conflict lies with the States concerned. At the same time, when it comes to principles, it is everyone's duty to defend them. In that regard, Azerbaijan highly appreciates the principled stance of Member States, as expressed in various forums, including the most recent summits of NATO, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Non-Aligned Movement, on issues of vital importance to our country and pertaining to its sovereignty and territorial integrity. We count on the continued resolve of the international community to defend the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, and on its strong solidarity with the just position of Azerbaijan.

We would like to express our concern over the situation with regard to the Middle East peace process, which has been at a standstill with no substantive progress towards the resumption of direct talks between the parties. We call upon the parties to create the conditions conducive to the resumption of negotiations. In that regard, we share the concerns of the international community over settlement activity in the occupied Palestinian territories, which places a tremendous burden on civilians, seriously obstructs the peace process and, what is even more dangerous, threatens the two-State solution and the emergence of a viable Palestinian State. We reiterate our support for Palestine's application for admission to membership in the United Nations and look forward to a solution to that issuebased on international law.

Azerbaijan also remains deeply concerned about the escalation of violence and the worsening socioeconomic and humanitarian situation in Syria. We believe that the solution to the crisis lies in the hands of the Syrian people and in their desire for mutual reconciliation and an all-inclusive political process. We welcome the appointment of Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi as the Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States for Syria, and express our firm support for his efforts.

We must once again express our deep concern over the recent escalation provoked by the blasphemy against Islam. We strongly condemn all assaults against religions. At the same time, attacks on civilians, in particular on diplomatic personnel, are unjustifiable under any circumstances. It is critical to foster global dialogue and cooperation to promote tolerance, peace and better understanding across countries, cultures and civilizations.

We are confident that during the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly, Member States will be able to take successful steps towards a stronger and more effective United Nations. With its active participation in the work of the organs of the United Nations, most notably the General Assembly and Security Council, Azerbaijan will continue to be in the forefront of international efforts to that end.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Ratu Inoke Kubuabola, Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Civil Aviation of the Republic of Fiji.

Mr. Kubuabola (Fiji): On behalf of the Prime Minister and the people of Fiji, I congratulate the President on his election and have full confidence in his guidance of the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly. I wish also to pay tribute to the tireless efforts

of his predecessor, Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, through what has been an eventful and turbulent year for the global community of nations.

The world is facing many challenges that demand our attention and collective action. As we all gathered last June in Rio de Janeiro for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, millions of people were recovering from, or living through, natural disasters. In Fiji, we experienced our worst flooding on record during the months of January and April. Beyond the human cost, the economic damage to infrastructure, schools, businesses, agriculture and tourism — a sector that generates 33 per cent of Fiji's gross domestic product — was immense, and we still have not fully recovered. Our floods were by no means the world's worst climatic disaster of the year; other peoples suffered much worse. But as a people who live on a group of small islands in the South Pacific, we feel particularly vulnerable.

The ongoing failure of the international community to seriously address climate change means that we will all see more frequent and more intense weather events. Those will erode our development gains and leave our people feeling poorer and less secure, so it is clear that it is indispensable to incorporate disaster risk reduction into global and national development strategies.

The post-2015 development agenda is now under discussion, and frameworks and modalities are being developed. However, our job with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is not complete. As a global community of nations that has committed to those goals, we must give meaningful support to all those States lagging in their progress. We must also ensure that a post-2015 development agenda does not simply delay the target date for the MDG indicators and goals. The development community can do much more, including meeting our agreed objectives for development funding.

Fiji has embarked on a comprehensive reform programme not only to promote development, but also to improve the lives of our people. We have embraced the Millennium Development Goals as they were intended — to provide specific objective standards for improving the lives of our people. We are the second country in the world to introduce the pneumococcal and rotavirus immunizations as standard, with a view to minimizing child mortality. That represents progress towards meeting MDGs 4 and 5.

But the reward is not in meeting the goals; the reward is in children who are healthier, families that are less burdened, and generations given a better chance to become productive adults. We must never forget that behind each of those Millennium Development Goals are human beings — the citizens of our nations — who look to us to provide opportunities for a fuller life. We still have work to do particularly in meeting MDGs 1, 3 and 6, and we are working on those as best we can.

The particular case of small island developing States in meeting those goals and their specific challenges will be addressed by the third Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, to be held in the Pacific region in 2014. The success of the Conference will be measured in actions, not simply in more words. Substantive preparations for the Conference must therefore be oriented towards taking action and achieving specific goals.

In addition to support for regional development, Fiji is also taking the lead in the region on broadband connectivity. It is clear to us that broadband is an essential technology for improving education, medicine, agriculture and environmental services. Broadband technology is especially important to us because it will help unite a dispersed people and help draw us closer to our island neighbours in the Pacific. If we take care to make it accessible, affordable and understandable, we will bring an entire universe of wisdom and understanding to the smallest schools and remotest villages. Information need no longer be the property mostly of people who live in the cities or who are attached to large institutions.

Like all islands nations, Fiji relies on the ocean and its resources as our economic lifeblood and source of sustainable development. While fish and other living marine resources have been vital to Fiji's economy and livelihood, we believe that our efforts to explore deep-sea mineral resources have greater potential, provided that a precautionary approach with regard to environmental sustainability is ensured.

The theme selected by the President for this year's general debate, "Bringing about adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means", is most relevant in these times of turbulence across the world. The United Nations must continue to be at the vanguard of international peace and security. It must be able to respond to new types of crises, always with an aim to stabilize the places it

enters and leave behind not just a state of peace and stability, but also an environment that fosters freedom and opportunity for the people.

In that context, Fiji continues to play a role in peacekeeping missions around the world that is far beyond what is expected of a country of our size and level of development. We contribute troops and police personnel to operations in Iraq, Liberia, South Sudan, Darfur and Timor-Leste. Fiji has responded to exigent requests by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, above and beyond agreed contributions, to ensure that peacekeeping operations in Iraq can continue unhindered, despite the additional burden it has placed on our troops operating far from home and for longer than envisaged. We believe that all nations must find ways to make the world safer, more humane and more livable, and as a people we are proud that we can make that contribution to global peace and security and to the lives of citizens far away from us. That is not just Government policy; it is a calling that is deeply embraced by the Fijian people.

Recognizing the role that peacekeeping missions with expanded mandates play in helping to build the foundations of a sustainable future, Fiji has in the past year also started to contribute in a small yet meaningful way to the corrections and justice sector of peacekeeping missions. Mentoring and strengthening corrections and justice institutions is part of the process of allowing post-conflict societies to take control of their own destinies, and Fiji is pleased to be able to be a part of those unfolding stories around the world.

Fiji has been honoured to be a part of that process in our own region through our contributions in Timor-Leste via the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT). Following the successful elections in Timor-Leste early this year, UNMIT will be in a position to wind down its operations later this year, allowing the Timorese people to take full ownership and control of their own destinies. Timor-Leste is now an observer to the regional organization of which Fiji is the current Chair, the Melanesian Spearhead Group, and we trust that through that organization and the United Nations we will have many years of collaboration ahead.

In the spirit of supporting self-determination, Fiji continues to work through the Decolonization Committee of the United Nations to ensure that New Caledonia's right to self-determination, as expressed in the Noumea Accord, is implemented faithfully by all parties. Fiji works through the Melanesian Spearhead Group in monitoring the progress of implementation of the Noumea Accord. Additionally, at the Engaging with the Pacific Meetings held in Fiji in 2011 and 2012, Pacific island leaders committed to supporting the inalienable right of the people of Ma'ohi Nui/French Polynesia to self-determination. We look forward to working through the United Nations processes and with all relevant partners in order to have the question of Ma'ohi Nui's self-determination placed on the United Nations agenda again.

Fiji is itself working through a period of reform and transition. We are building a sustainable democracy founded on the principle of "one person, one vote, one value". Elections will be held under a new constitution and electoral system no later than September 2014. Those elections will see the citizens of Fiji go to the polls without regard to their race for the first time in our nation's history. Fiji's new constitution will be based on some unassailable democratic principles: a secular State that recognizes our multi-faith society; a common national identity in which all citizens, not just indigenous people, will call themselves Fijians for the first time; a war against corruption, which inhibits the country's development; an independent judiciary to uphold the rights of every Fijian; social justice and the elimination of all forms of discrimination, so that every Fijian is treated equally; good and transparent governance; and lowering the voting age to 18 to give our young people a voice.

We set up an independent Constitutional Commission in March to draft a new constitution guided by those principles. It will be a constitution of and for the people. Ordinary Fijians are seizing the opportunity to put forward their views at public hearings throughout the country and to voice the issues that are most important to them. The Commission's recommendations will be reviewed by a Constituent Assembly in early 2013. This body, made up of a broad cross-section of Fijian society, will formulate the final document through public discussion and debate. That will set the scene for elections in 2014, for which preparations have already begun. Through a process of electronic registration carried out in July and August of this year, almost half a million Fijians have so far registered to vote.

Throughout this process, we have stayed true to the principle that we in Fiji must determine our own destiny, one that is inclusive and fair to all citizens.

We are taking the time necessary to get it right. We have endured criticism and a degree of isolation at the hands of some of our traditional friends among the world's democracies. By now, those countries have begun to recognize that we are serious about building a sustainable democracy that is racially blind, that offers equal opportunity, and that protects all citizens from the tyranny of the majority. We need the support of the world's democracies, and we invite them to work with us in our quest to establish the kind of democratic system that they enjoy. After 40 years of strife and instability, the work of true and sustainable democracy is just beginning, and we ask the international community to support us.

We have examined and redefined our world view to help forge productive, friendly relationships with all nations of goodwill. In 2011, Fiji opened three new embassies in Brazil, Indonesia and South Africa. We have expanded our diplomatic presence this year by opening embassies in the Republic of Korea and the United Arab Emirates. We want to learn more, to exchange more, to develop more, to trade more, and certainly to contribute more through active and robust engagement with other nations.

In the United Nations, Fiji pledges to work in the most constructive manner possible, and to respect the ideals of the United Nations Charter. That includes the International Labour Organization (ILO), with which we are engaged at the present moment. The Fijian Government's commitment to a future of equality and opportunity for all Fijians includes ensuring that the rights of working people are protected and extended.

The Constitutional Commission has received submissions from all sectors of Fijian society, including trade unions and public employees. We expect the new constitution to help us continue to build an environment that promotes safe working conditions, protects workers from arbitrary actions, and allows workers to form unions. We seek to ensure that unions can take collective action, as directed by their member workers, and are subject only to restrictions that are generally accepted as protecting the public good. We also seek to protect the rights of those workers who choose not to affiliate with unions.

The Fijian Government is committed to protecting workers who are fortunate enough to have jobs and to ensuring that all workers receive fair wages. We are equally committed to creating employment opportunities for the young and less affluent. As part of Fiji's progress in reform towards democracy, we are reviewing our current labour laws to ensure their compliance with the 34 ILO conventions that Fiji has ratified. The tripartite Employment Relations Advisory Board is a key participant in this process. This year alone, Fiji has ratified or adopted eight ILO instruments, as recommended by the tripartite Board, including the 2006 Maritime Labour Convention.

By empowering Fijians, the Government is seeking to ensure that all citizens, regardless of ethnic background, are on a level playing field and in possession of the tools needed to compete with their peers in the global community, improve their livelihoods and fulfil their dreams. By modernizing Fiji, the Government is seeking to make the country and its institutions and legal system strong, independent and world-class.

Fiji may be a relatively small country, but it has big aspirations. They include being a good global citizen, a leader by example among island nations, and an actively engaged member of the international community. In the spirit of constructive contribution to the global community and the United Nations, I am pleased to say that at today's ministerial meeting of the Group of 77 and China, Fiji was endorsed as the Chair of the Group for the year 2013. Fiji takes on this responsibility with a deep sense of humility, a willingness to work collaboratively with all States, and a commitment to addressing the inequalities that exist between developing and developed countries.

As we look forward to a productive sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly, we reiterate our full support for and cooperation with the President and all Members, with a view to advancing the objectives of this body and the aspirations of the global community.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Gilbert Saboya Sunyé, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Institutional Relations of the Principality of Andorra.

Mr. Saboya Sunyé (Andorra) (*spoke in Catalan; English text provided by the delegation*): I would first like to extend hearty congratulations to the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session, Mr. Jeremić, to whom I wish the greatest success in his work.

Just one year ago, I ended my statement (see A/66/PV.27) by reasserting the notion of

commitment as a fundamental value and linchpin of our political action, understood as a deep belief in the values of democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law; as the assumption of individual responsibilities for a common project; and ultimately as a desire for dialogue and understanding. It is in the pursuit of that commitment and that balance — what we might call the right balance — that the difficulty of Government resides. That is the case at home, in every one of our States, and also in our shared home of the United Nations.

A year ago in this Assembly, we echoed a phrase of the then French President, who stated: "Let us choose the path of compromise, which is neither renunciation nor repudiation, but which allows us to move forward, step by step" (*A/66/PV.11, p. 23*). Indeed, on the path of compromise and the right balance, we cannot and must not abandon the defence of human rights, the rule of law and the most essential democratic values such as freedom of expression. We cannot and should not deny respect to others.

However, establishing a fair balance does not mean conducting a balancing act. Indeed, that balance must be based on strong principles. There can be no excuse for violence, intolerance or impunity. President Obama was right when he mentioned in this Hall that the recent attacks on diplomatic missions were not solely an attack on the United States, but also an assault on the foundations of the United Nations itself. There can be no excuse or impunity for such acts.

(*spoke in English*)

We are all Chris Stevens. But what defines us is not how we fall but how we rise again. We will stand by all Chris Stevens as they rise to defend the ideals of the United Nations.

(*spoke in Catalan*)

Allow me today to echo the words of the new President of the French Republic, François Hollande, Co-Prince of Andorra, who stated before this Assembly that "The mission of the United Nations is to tackle these challenges and to find strong and just responses to them together." (*A/67/PV.6, p. 43*) For over 65 years, the United Nations has been a reference for peace, justice and respect for human rights. Remarkable progress has indeed been observed in recent years. It is no less true, however, that the countries represented here cannot afford the luxury of falling into complacency. The demand for just and strong responses is very real.

The change of regime in Libya and the ongoing grievous conflict in Syria have presented the international community with the awkward dilemma of having to find a fair balance between resolving conflicts peacefully and the rule of law — in short, between peace and justice. It would appear that, in order to attain a peaceful solution to a conflict or to end hostilities, justice must be sacrificed while those who have violated human rights go unpunished; or that, due to inflexible application of international law, conflicts will continue forever. A fair balance must not allow either those who violate human rights to go unpunished, or conflicts to continue endlessly. With regard to Syria, it is time to support open societies and political transitions that can guarantee a framework for democratic development. I wish to praise the commitment of the Secretary-General and Joint Special Representative Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi to finding a solution to the conflict in Syria.

The Secretary-General has said that people want progress and solutions today. They want ideas, leadership and concrete hope for the future. The Secretary-General's words accurately reflect what the world expects from all Member States. We also need to maintain perspective, because if complacency is dangerous, so too are harsh criticism and pessimism. While the working methods of the United Nations system are far from optimal, we should not forget that the reality of today seemed an unattainable dream a century ago. We should move on from talk of dreams to talk of ambition. We should move on from dreaming about change to exerting the ambition to change. We should move on from "I have a dream", as stated by Martin Luther King, Jr., to speaking about the ambition that we all share.

In his statement at the opening of the general debate (see A/67/PV.6), Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon rightly mentioned raising our levels of ambition. The step from dream to ambition needs perspective; dreaming requires knowing only how we would like things to be, but having and realizing ambition requires us to know how far we are prepared to go, while bearing very much in mind the path travelled and everything to be experienced along the way.

In that respect the United Nations and its system allow us to face the future with cautious optimism, as the world has been better and more just with the presence

of the United Nations than without it. However, when we look at its evolution, we realize that something is not quite right, as the evolution process has been fraught with limitations, shortcomings and obstacles that the international community must address in its efforts to resolve conflicts peacefully and in accordance with the law. The Secretary-General rightly emphasized his new Education First initiative, which encourages democratic values, human rights and the rule of law. And those values can guarantee equal opportunity and social cohesion.

During its forthcoming presidency of the Council of Europe, Andorra will prioritize education as a tool for encouraging democratic values, respect for human rights and the rule of law. Andorra is particularly sensitive to education, not only in the sphere of international cooperation, but also domestically, as it is aware that its unique, multicultural and multilingual educational approach, featuring three public systems — Andorran, French and Spanish — in a small society with its own identity, has not been a problem, but rather an asset and an essential element of social cohesion.

(*spoke in French*)

We see that commitment to multiculturalism and multilingualism within the francophone community. The commitment to openness and exchange among individuals is good and is far from self-absorption in one's own language or culture. Now is not the time for self-absorption but rather for openness; it is time for ambition and not protectionism. The work of the francophone community is deeply aligned with our values, and we will convene in Africa at the forthcoming Summit of the Francophonie to defend the spirit of openness to democratic values and human rights.

(*spoke in Spanish*)

That commitment to multiculturalism also belies the strong bonds we feel with our Latin American friends. Our involvement within the General Assembly in the preparatory work for the forthcoming Cadiz summit, to be hosted by our dear neighbour Spain, should also be viewed through the prism of openness and the defence of democratic values, human rights and the rule of law.

(*spoke in Catalan*)

The Principality of Andorra today reasserts its commitment to the founding principles of the United Nations: the promotion of peace, liberty, justice, democracy and human rights. Those are not utopian values and principles; quite the contrary, it would be unrealistic and unthinkable to seek to establish stability in the world with any other values. What is important is to come here today to proclaim not that Andorra has one of the oldest and most stable parliaments and political systems on the planet, but that at the end of the thirteenth century its political system was consolidated in a very short period of time and in circumstances that were far from ideal. In a very brief time span, the same system was again able to adapt to modern reality at the end of the twentieth century. In our country, indeed, it was not until 1971 that women were entitled to vote. Yet only 40 years later, in 2011 the people of Andorra elected a Parliament with the second-highest number of female representatives in the world. This is why I spoke earlier of viewing things from a perspective of process and evolution.

History shows us that what appeared utopian not long ago has become reality today. We should not assume that things cannot change and cannot get better. The limits that the United Nations seems to have encountered after almost seven decades of existence will be overcome one day, and today's challenges will be viewed as things of the past. The numerous countries that form the international community have shown how rapidly things can change when there is a will to act. One only has to take a look at the determination with which many of the members of this Assembly have joined forces and coordinated their policies to find solutions to the grave financial and economic crisis that has rocked the world over the last few years.

The need for rapid and profound change has also arrived in Andorra. A year ago, we stated in our speech that our country had one of the most closed economies on the planet and that it posed significant barriers to foreign investment, as foreigners had to meet costly requirements to attain full economic rights. Today, only 12 months later, the Andorran economy is 100 per cent open to foreign capital, and every foreign resident is granted full economic rights from the first day of his or her residency.

The President took the Chair.

Earlier, I referred to openness in a broad sense, but today economic openness should enable us to rediscover the path of inclusive growth that has defined us, albeit now within an open and diversified economy geared to the pursuit of competitiveness, innovation

and general progress. This entire process has been accompanied by an updating of the Andorran model, with an appropriate tax framework and a commitment to transparency towards the international community. The whole process is based on the belief that recovery means not faint-hearted withdrawal, but rather the ambition to open up to the world and a willingness to compete. That conviction is the driving force behind the implementation by the Principality of Andorra of some of the most significant socioeconomic changes in its entire history.

Twenty years ago, the United Nations pioneered the promotion of sustainable development. When the international community met in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, at what was called the Earth Summit, the need to consider sustainable growth became manifest and the subject was tackled from a threefold economic, environmental and social perspective. The conclusions of that Rio Summit, to which scant or no attention has been paid, are today so topical that the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in Rio in June, stressed the very same policies. However, although 20 years ago sustainability might have seemed solely an environmental issue, experience has shown us that public finance, economic growth and our model of social protections must also be sustainable. The challenge of sustainability is now, more than ever, shared and interdisciplinary.

Many years ago, the United Nations was created in the belief that maintaining peace and security in the world was unrealistic without advances in human rights, in international law and in democracy. There can be no lasting peace or security without liberty or justice. More recently, we have all learned not only that separating democracy from economic progress makes no sense, but also that it is foolish to believe in unrestrained, unlimited growth at any cost, the consequences of which we are still feeling.

A few days ago, at the reception for the diplomatic corps, our Episcopal Co-Prince, Joan Enric Vives Sicilia, noted the dangerous tendency to prioritize having rather than being. We must learn the lessons of recent years, in which the desire to have everything we wanted too often led us to forget to pursue everything we needed. We must build a more sustainable, more interrelated and more co-responsible world in order to lay the foundations for more secure economic growth. A pledge to progress and prosperity also means support for democracy, for security and for peace.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting.

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply. May I remind members that statements made in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first statement and to five minutes for the second, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Llorentty Solíz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Earlier today, the Foreign Minister of Chile referred to the address to the Assembly made by the Constitutional President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Evo Morales Ayma. Bolivia cannot and will not remain silent about the series of inaccuracies, omissions and falsehoods that were presented to the Assembly as facts.

The Foreign Minister of Chile stated that "Bolivia has no right to claim sovereign access to the sea" and that "Chile has fully met its obligations" under the Treaty of Peace and Friendship of 1904 (*A/66/PV.15*). What he failed to say is that in 1879 Chile invaded Bolivian territory, with the help of transnational companies, for the oligarchic purposes of appropriating for itself natural resources belonging to Bolivians. He also omitted to say that the result of that invasion was an unjust and imposed treaty that has not been fully implemented.

It is unjust in that it deprives a country of the exercise of many of its rights and has left a deep wound in the heart of South America in an attempt to acquire rights by the use of force. The Treaty was imposed because it was concluded through the use of force, not with free consent but under threat. The Treaty is unfulfilled because the Republic of Chile has not implemented its provisions. To cite one example, the restrictions on free transit and the nearly decade-long closure on the Chilean side of the Arica-La Paz railway are, among other things, undeniable evidence of Chile's non-observance of the provisions of the Treaty with the State of Bolivia.

The Plurinational State of Bolivia rejects the subjective views put forward by Chile about events in the League of Nations in 1921 and at the forty-second General Assembly of the Organization of American States. Neither that organization nor its Judicial Committee made a negative evaluation of the basis for Bolivia's claim. Bolivia categorically rejects any statement to the effect that the League of Nations or

any other judicial or multilateral organ of that time or of ours has denied the right of Bolivia to free and sovereign access to the Pacific Ocean and its coast.

The Plurinational State of Bolivia rejects the assertion of the Government of the Republic of Chile that the Constitution of the Plurinational State of Bolivia adopted in 2009 includes provisions that contravene international law. We maintain that, on the contrary, those provisions are in full conformity with international law, even as we reaffirm our right to a sovereign coastal outlet to the Pacific Ocean, and reassert the commitment of the Bolivian State to the mechanisms for the peaceful settlement of disputes set out in Article 33 of the United Nations Charter.

For decades, Bolivia has sought to resolve the matter through dialogue. However, in 2010 Chile rejected the attempts at reconciliation made in a 13-point agenda, which included useful and feasible proposals to resolve the injustice. Chile has stated that our dispute is a strictly bilateral matter, but we recall that there are 11 resolutions of the Organization of American States in force, among which we highlight resolution 426 of the General Assembly of the Organization of American States, of 31 October 1979, a century after the invasion, which states that

> "it is of continuing hemispheric interest that an equitable solution be found whereby Bolivia will obtain appropriate sovereign access to the Pacific Ocean, and (...) resolves to recommend to the states most directly concerned with this problem that they open negotiations for the purpose of providing Bolivia with a free and sovereign territorial connection with the Pacific Ocean. These negotiations shall take into account the rights and interests of the parties involved, and might consider, among other things, the inclusion of a port area for integrated multinational development, as well as the Bolivian proposal that no territorial compensation be included."

We believe that recent statements that use the term "force" are incompatible with the spirit not only of the session of the General Assembly that has begun, whose theme is the "Bringing about adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means", but also runs counter to the principles of the Organization. As President Morales Ayma stated in his address to the Assembly, this is no longer the time of intra-regional or foreign colonization.

Mr. Errázuriz (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): I must respond on behalf of the State of Chile to the assertions made by the delegation of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, which is seeking once again to distract the attention of the Assembly towards issues that are outside its competence by invoking my country's name.

Chile is a State that respects international law and the sovereign equality of all members of the international community. It actively cooperates with the international human rights system and has demonstrated its support for international peace and security, in particular through its peacekeeping troops.

My Government cannot allow the general debate to be used as a pretext to revisit history and existing treaties and to distort the context of our relationship with Bolivia. We have offered signs of our willingness to engage in broad dialogue. Our physical integration process with Bolivia, in which the free transit regime is unimpeded and duty free, has achieved positive results. We have granted unilateral benefits that serve Bolivia's foreign trade and all of its inhabitants. At the forty-second regular session of the General Assembly of the Organization of American States, held in Cochabamba in June, no country indicated that this subject should be addressed within an international organization or on the basis of resolutions that have been superceded by subsequent developments. The organization underscored the bilateral nature of the matter.

President Morales Ayma, in an interview given to *El Mercurio*, published on 23 March 2011, provided an extensive overview of the dialogue process in which he was engaged at the time with the Chilean Government, expressing his satisfaction and confidence that the process would end successfully. For unexplained reasons, on the same day he indicated in an address given in his country, and using offensive and hostile language, that the negotiations were over and that Bolivia would litigate its maritime aspirations. There is a public record of all he said.

Chile once again reaffirms its comprehensive commitment to the rule of international law. Respect for and compliance with international treaties and the peaceful coexistence between States are foundations of our policy. Nothing shall lead my country to stray from that duty, and we hope that Bolivia will also return to the bilateral approach.

Mr. Ri Tong Il (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Today, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of

South Korea made a statement touching on the nuclear issue of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the so-called human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Concerning those issues, the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea totally rejects those allegations as provocative and unsubstantiated statements with no grounds and considers them to be misleading with regard to reality and the facts and distorting of the truth. In that regard, the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea would like to clarify its position.

First, with regard to the origins of the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula, the first nuclear weapon was introduced by the largest nuclear-weapon State, the United States. The United States did not hesitate to bring and deploy the first nuclear weapon in South Korea in 1957. In the 1970s, again the United States did not hesitate to increase the number of nuclear weapons to over 1,000.

With regard to the policy or doctrine about how to use nuclear weapons, in the 1950s former President Truman again did not hesitate to give orders to prepare to use the strategic force of nuclear weapons during the time of the Korean War. Again, the Force Commander at the time, General MacArthur, did not hesitate to openly blackmail the people of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the entire Korean nation by saying that he would spray radioactive nuclear powder. He said that only after 120 years would living things begin to grow again. In 2002, the Bush Administration listed the Democratic People's Republic of Korea as part of the axis of evil, together with Iran and Iraq, and again the Bush Administration did not hesitate to put the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on the list for pre-emptive nuclear first strike, together with Iran, Iraq, Syria, China and Russia. In 2010, the current Administration again did not hesitate to clarify its position that the non-nuclear weapon States, with the exception of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Iran, would be given so-called security assurances. That means that the United States will continue to pre-emptively target the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Iran. All those facts very clearly indicate that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has been living under the direct threat of nuclear weapons and blackmail.

Secondly, there is the issue of threat. In its statement, South Korea alleged that the nuclear weapons of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea are a threat to North-East Asia. That is not at all true. As far as the threat is concerned, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has a different perspective. As soon as they came to power in 2008, the incumbent South Korean authorities totally rejected the Joint Declaration adopted twice at the Inter-Korean summit meetings in 2000 and 2007, driving the situation into its worst state ever in the history of the divided Korean nation. Those two Inter-Korean summit meetings and Declarations were regarded as a reflection of the hope for peace and unification of the entire Korean nation and international community. It was demonstrated by the Assembly's unanimous adoption of a resolution in this very Hall, giving great hope and expectations for the eventual unification of the country and lasting peace on the Korean peninsula and in the region.

Moreover, South Korea did not hesitate to join in hostile activities and military manoeuvres with the United States. Those two countries have not hesitated to engage every year in large-scale joint military exercises. For them, it is everyday business to threaten and challenge the desire of the region and the entire international community for peace, security and détente in the Korean peninsula. Those military exercises are based on the so-called joint operation plans 5029 and 5030; they have various numbers and code names. They presuppose the occupation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, followed by military rule. They have had this war scenario ready for some years now.

A typical example of that was the operation held just last month by South Korea and the United States. It was the largest ever. Over 400,000 troops and different types of sophisticated weapons were involved. All the troops of the various units were involved, heavily trained and fully ready to cross into the Democratic People's Republic of Korea at any time once the order was given. That means that the United States and South Korea are fully ready to cross the demarcation line to attack the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. That is the reality.

Concerning the missile issue, again, South Korea did not hesitate to join in categorizing the satellite launch, which was entirely legitimate under international law, as a ballistic missile launch. Never before in the history of the Security Council has a satellite been accused of being a ballistic missile. The United States is the largest producer of missiles and the largest launcher of satellites, but the Security Council has never taken action on that issue. Only the Democratic People's

Republic of Korea was blamed, and South Korea was hell-bent on joining in against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Thirdly, as far as human rights are concerned, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea totally rejects what they call the resolution on the human rights situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The most serious violator of human rights in the world is none other than South Korea. The incumbent South Korean authorities are using a dictatorship under what they call the updated national security law. It offers no guarantee whatsoever of political freedom, social freedom or democracy.

In conclusion, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea delegation once again clarifies the position that its possession of a nuclear weapon is due to the blackmailing and hostilities of the United States and South Korea, which threaten the survival and sovereignty of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. That is the stark reality in the Korean peninsula.

Mr. Sahraei (Islamic Republic of Iran): The Iranian islands of Abu Musa, Greater Tunb and Lesser Tunb are an integral and eternal part of Iranian territory. The Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran categorically rejects any claim to the contrary, including the baseless claim raised in today's meeting. Iran underlines that the measures undertaken on those islands by the Iranian authorities are fully based on the sovereign rights of Iran and the principle of its territorial integrity, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the provisions of international law.

While stressing the importance of the brotherly and good-neighbourly relations that exist between Iran and its neighbouring countries in the Persian Gulf, we continue to believe that constructive negotiations between the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the relevant officials of the United Arab Emirates will lead to the further expansion of relations in various fields and help to remove any misunderstanding that may arise with regard to the implementation of the arrangements emanating from the documents exchanged in 1971 on that issue.

Moreover, the Islamic Republic of Iran wishes to stress that the only historically correct and universally recognized name for the body of water between Iran and the Arabian peninsula, as emphasized by the United Nations itself, is the Persian Gulf. Accordingly, any use of a fabricated name for that body of water, including the fabricated name used in the statement of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Emirates, is totally groundless and absolutely unacceptable, and bears no legal or political value.

Mr. Llorentty Solíz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Plurinational State of Bolivia wishes to exercise its right to reply in order to respond once again to the distortion presented by the delegation of the Republic of Chile.

The Chilean delegation referred to 23 March. That is the date on which the Bolivian people painfully commemorate the loss of our coast as the result of an invasion and the use of force. On that day, we commemorate the death of one of our heroes in defence of Bolivian territory at the bridge of Topáter. On that day, young people, boys and girls, take to the streets in processions in Bolivia, clamouring for the return of our sovereign access to the Pacific Ocean.

Undeniably, Chile has failed to comply with the provisions of the 1904 Treaty of Peace and Friendship between Chile and Bolivia. Not only does the legal free transit regime not exist, but in fact difficulties and obstacles have been raised that have largely voided the Treaty. By way of example, we reiterate the case of the Arica-La Paz railway, in addition to the limitations imposed on the transport of goods and persons to the ports of the Pacific Ocean.

Reference has been made to an attempt to revise history, but what prevails in the scenario is the need to rectify the injustices that have been committed throughout the history of our people and that continue to wreak suffering upon individuals. No military victory, no degree of arrogance grants unlimited rights when they are the result of force, nor should any treaty that is imposed by force or threat be considered immutable over time, especially when it exercises a stranglehold on an entire population. For decades now, Bolivia has underscored the need for dialogue, but to date, after more than 100 years since that invasion, the dialogue has received no tangible response acknowledging that, as stipulated in the resolution of the Organization of American States, there is a need to restore sovereign maritime access to the Plurinational State of Bolivia.

Bolivia shall continue to raise the issue in all international forums, to the extent permitted by international law, in order to demand the return of its maritime outlet based on reason, international law and

justice. The Political Constitution of our State referred to by the delegation of Chile states that

> "[t]he effective solution to the maritime dispute through peaceful means and the full exercise of sovereignty over that territory are permanent and inalienable objectives of the Bolivian State".

In recent years, President Morales Ayma has updated the Assembly on the setbacks or progress made in the bilateral process. Unfortunately, the bilateral dialogue was unilaterally called off by Chile. I reiterate that Bolivia naturally reserves the right to apply to all international and jurisdictional forums that permit it to regain its sovereign access to the Pacific Ocean.

Mr. Errázuriz (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Bolivia has a distorted vision not only of history, but also of the facts. The 1904 Treaty was signed 20 years after the ceasefire. I reiterate that it was not Chile that called off the dialogue with Bolivia — quite the contrary. In spite of those circumstances, we have continued to appeal to Bolivia for understanding, as did our Minister for Foreign Affairs today.

The representative of Bolivia suggested that Chile has not complied with the 1904 Treaty. The General Assembly should know that the Arica-La Paz railway to which he referred was practically destroyed after it had been operated by a Bolivian company, which made it necessary not only to rehabilitate the rails themselves but to clean up the contamination that resulted from the transport of minerals. Bolivia knows that Chile has invested tens of millions of dollars in recent years to ensure that the railway shall become operative once again this year.

Similarly, we must underscore that the President of Bolivia, when addressing the General Assembly (see A/67/PV.11), indicated with pride that his country's reserves had risen for the first time $13 billion. We might therefore indicate that, without a doubt, a significant portion of that increase in its reserves is due to Bolivia's foreign trade, which is largely carried out using Chilean ports, precisely on the basis of the 1904 Treaty and on the free transit facilities that Chile provides.

Chile remains prepared to resume dialogue, but without preconditions demanding, without legal foundation, a sovereign maritime access, or that rely on constitutional provisions that run counter to international law, which Chile cannot accept and which are not valid.

Mr. Al-Yafei (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): I must exercise my right of reply to the false and illegal claims made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran concerning the United Arab Emirates islands of Abu Musa, Greater Tunb and Lesser Tunb. My country, which has never renounced its sovereign, legitimate and historic rights to those three islands, which have been militarily occupied by Iran since 1971, categorically rejects all the erroneous Iranian allegations, which are contrary to all of the historical and legal facts and documents affirming the sovereignty of the United Arab Emirates over those three islands.

My country categorically rejects, on the basis of the Charter of the United Nations and the provisions of international law, all of the illegal measures that Iran has taken with respect to those islands. We therefore appeal anew to the international community to urge the Islamic Republic of Iran to engage in unconditional bilateral negotiations with the United Arab Emirates, in accordance with the United Nations Charter, in order to put a definitive end to the occupation of the three islands that belong to the United Arab Emirates, or alternatively to request arbitration before the International Court of Justice, as a number of countries have done in dealing with similar cases.

We again emphasize that the strengthening of relations of cooperation between the States of the region and Iran, and the promotion of stability and economic prosperity in the Arabian Gulf region require Iran to commit to establishing good-neighbourly relations based on the principles of respect for the sovereignty and independence of States, their territorial integrity and non-interference in their internal affairs.

Mr. Sahraei (Islamic Republic of Iran): Based on a vast variety of historical documents, it is perfectly evident that throughout history the three islands in question have been an integral part of Iranian territory. As has been emphasized regularly, the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Islamic Republic of Iran over the islands is not negotiable. In that regard, my country stands ready to have bilateral discussions with the relevant officials of the United Arab Emirates in order to remove any concern or any misunderstanding that may arise regarding the implementation of the

agreement concluded between the two countries in 1971 on the issue.

Mr. Al-Yafei (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am taking the floor once again in exercise of my country's right of reply to respond to the claim made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran that his country possesses legal documents regarding its occupation of the three islands of the United Arab Emirates. If that were true, I would ask Iran to table those documents and to bring the matter to the attention of the International Court of Justice, which would then examine Iran's claims and allegations.

I think that it is obvious that despite Iran's claims to have the right to militarily occupy the territory of another State, and given the fact that Iran refuses to enter into direct negotiations on the question of its occupation of the Emirate islands and to submit the question to the International Court of Justice, it obviously cannot offer any legal or historical document to substantiate its allegations. That is well known, and Iran is continuing to exercise a fait accompli policy by maintaining its illegal military occupation of three islands of the United Arab Emirates.

The meeting rose at 8.55 p.m.

United Nations A/67/PV.18

General Assembly

Sixty-seventh session

Official Records

18th plenary meeting
Saturday, 29 September 2012, 9 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Jeremić ..... (Serbia)

The meeting was called to order at 9.10 a.m.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Nebojša Kaludjerović, Minister for Foreign Affairs and European Integration of Montenegro.

Mr. Kaludjerović (Montenegro): It is a great honour to deliver these remarks on behalf of Montenegro. At the outset, allow me to address two friends and colleagues. I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to preside over the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. You will enjoy, as always, the full cooperation and support of Montenegro in this important task. I would also like to pay tribute to Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser for his contribution to the work of the General Assembly, especially in promoting mediation as a means of settling disputes by peaceful means.

I extend special appreciation to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his efforts to promote multilateralism and joint action in ensuring a peaceful, secure and prosperous world. I would especially like to reiterate our satisfaction with his recent successful visit to Montenegro, which confirmed the strong partnership between the United Nations and my country.

Montenegro has always been strongly committed to multilateral cooperation and respect for the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. We have demonstrated this in our region by promoting good-neighbourly relations and regional cooperation, as well as worldwide through support for and participation in global efforts to build and maintain peace.

The High-level Meeting on the Rule of Law that preceded the general debate once again stressed the importance of democratic governance and respect for human rights. These are preconditions for the prosperity of all our citizens and of society as a whole. Failure in this regard is our common concern. We therefore stress the individual responsibility of all countries to strengthen the rule of law and promote human rights, as well as the role of the United Nations in providing adequate and efficient support to these efforts. Respect for the rule of law at the international level, national ownership of rule of law activities, and the incorporation and effective implementation of international norms within our domestic legal systems are our key objectives.

Strengthening international partnership in maintaining and building peace and security is crucial. As a Mediterranean country, we share the concerns of the international community for the recent developments in the southern Mediterranean and the Middle East.

The scale and consequences of the violence in Syria serve as a stern reminder of the importance of preventive measures in preserving international peace and security; hence the need to enhance United Nations preventive capacities and the role of dialogue and mediation in peaceful conflict resolution. Montenegro strongly advocates an approach that emphasizes the

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early prevention and elimination of threats before they evolve into sources of conflict.

The responsibility to protect and its operationalization remain a key task. In the era of accountability, perpetrators of crimes against humanity should not go unpunished. Countries need to demonstrate strong commitment to the rule of law, respect for human rights and freedoms, democracy and non-use of force in settling disputes.

Montenegro stands ready to increase its participation in peacekeeping operations, in accordance with its capacities and in line with international efforts. We support in particular United Nations initiatives aimed at improving civilian protection and the development of civilian capacities for maintaining stability by advancing the mandates of peacekeeping missions. In that context, we fully support the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and strengthening the role of women in conflict and post-conflict situations.

My country is firmly dedicated to the comprehensive implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, as well as the United Nations sanctions regime. With regard to the Global Strategy review, we fully endorse the proposal of the Secretary-General to appoint a United Nations counter-terrorism coordinator in order to improve strategic coordination, coherence and substantive implementation of the Strategy.

We strongly support global efforts for disarmament and non-proliferation, while stressing that the fight against transnational threats, such as human trafficking, cybercrime and the illicit drug trade, require a comprehensive approach.

As a multicultural country, Montenegro builds its society on principles of understanding, tolerance and mutual respect. Diversity does not divide but enriches our society, thanks to tradition and trust built throughout the long Montenegrin history. As we have recently witnessed, differences can be abused and easily turn into senseless acts of violence against the innocent, which is unacceptable. My country therefore remains committed to promoting intercultural dialogue, tolerance and respect at all levels.

In the six years following the restoration of its independence, Montenegro has achieved significant progress, both in internal development and in international relations. We have very good relations with all our neighbours, while the region as a whole stands before a unique challenge to demonstrate that it is capable of reinforcing overall cooperation.

Montenegro actively participates in all regional processes and initiatives aimed at intensifying mutual and constructive cooperation and strengthening security and stability in South-East Europe. After its turbulent past, the region is brought together by the common strategic goal of European integration. Although there remain issues that need international assistance and support, we have achieved a new level of trust, development and maturity that have resulted in the individual progress of each country in European and Euro-Atlantic integration. The opening of European Union accession negotiations in June this year and our continuous progress on our Euro-Atlantic path represent strong recognition of the results we have achieved. We are fully focused on and committed to continuing the implementation of reforms and reaching the highest international standards, in particular in the areas of the rule of law, human rights and freedoms, and democratic governance. Strengthening institutional and human capacities will reinforce our political stability and economic prosperity, as is essential in this time of ever-evolving crises that affect us all.

Progress in the integration processes does not mean the absence of problems. We attach great importance to resolving issues essential for the development of our society, such as the empowerment of women, improving the situation of the Roma population, and settling the status of refugees, internally displaced persons and other vulnerable groups. We are fully committed to tackling these complex challenges through efficient and lasting solutions and models for the better social integration of every individual. We are particularly aware of this at times when social and economic disparities become more visible and demand stronger efforts by the State for their elimination.

The promotion of and respect for human rights are important goals in our internal and foreign policy agenda. We are therefore confident that Montenegro will gain the trust of States Members of the United Nations this coming November and be elected to the Human Rights Council for the period 2013-2015. We are strongly committed to contributing to the efficiency and effectiveness of the Council and the system of protection and improvement of human rights and freedoms. Support for the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, full cooperation with the Council and

its special procedures, and active promotion of human rights and freedoms at the international level in order to respond in a timely manner to situations of human rights violations in the world — these will be major guidelines for our activities in the Council.

The results of the implementation of the United Nations Delivering as One reform programme speak in favour not only of reform of the Organization, but also of even greater effectiveness in adapting the United Nations to the development needs of a country. Montenegro has achieved tangible progress in implementing an integrated programme and, to a certain extent, is already implementing the joint programming model as a next phase of Delivering as One. Strengthening national ownership and joint programming, as well as making use of the relative advantages of the various United Nations agencies, are fundamental principles on which our cooperation programme is based up to 2016. We will continue to support all efforts aimed at improving the United Nations system and its effectiveness and operational activities in the field.

Sustainable development, poverty reduction and economic growth, conflict and post-conflict situations are just some of the issues that require joint action. In that context, sustainable development with all its pillars stands out as our priority. Montenegro is among the countries that are on track to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In that regard, we stress the importance of the MDGs as a basis for defining sustainable development goals, which must be a central part of the global post-2015 development agenda and thus help us to form a clear expression of political commitment to sustainable development. We stand ready to actively contribute to shaping and determining the necessary indicators, as well as timelines for their implementation. We believe that the question of sustainable development, as well as the issue of reaching legally binding agreements on climate change within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, must involve compromise on the part of United Nations Members. We therefore hope to see positive developments at the Doha Conference.

A shared determination, openness and willingness to reach compromise and accept reality are all truly necessary in order for us to move forward. Our commitment to meeting the MDGs should not be neglected, however difficult the economic and financial situation worldwide. Eradicating poverty, and creating partnerships with civil society and the private sector so as to enable us to achieve sustainable energy for all by 2030, as well as the Zero Hunger Challenge launched by the Secretary-General, are our common objectives. Together we can achieve those goals.

At a time when interdependence and integration are major trends in global politics, no country on its own can handle the increasingly demanding challenges posed by modern society. Cooperation is a prerequisite for success. I am confident that small countries like Montenegro can play an important role and be part of the solution. We remain dedicated to the principles of cooperation and mutual trust, and strongly committed to contributing to strengthening the United Nations system and its role in global governance, at both the national and the international levels.

Before I conclude, allow me to add a small, personal note. The first time I attended the General Assembly, I was an attaché from the then Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia. Today, many years and three different States later, I have the privilege of standing before the Assembly as head of the delegation of my country, Montenegro. The world may have changed in ways we never anticipated, but our Organization and what it stands for have weathered the challenges and remain globally important and equally valuable for every one of us.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Össur Skarphéðinsson, Minister for Foreign Affairs and External Trade of the Republic of Iceland.

Mr. Skarphéðinsson (Iceland): It is a pleasure to be able to address the General Assembly here on this beautiful morning in New York, and I would first like to take the opportunity to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. Be assured that the Icelandic delegation will assist you in every way possible.

Last year, I brought the Assembly the message that my Government would propose to our Parliament that Iceland recognize Palestine as a sovereign and independent State. I am happy to be able to stand here today and say that we have fulfilled that promise. What is more, not a single member of the Icelandic Parliament voted against the recognition of Palestine. Today, we have a fully fledged and strong formal diplomatic relationship between our two countries of Palestine and Iceland.

The United Nations recently estimated that Gaza will no longer be livable by 2020 unless urgent action is taken to improve water and power supplies, health and basic education. The deplorable living conditions described in that report demonstrate only too well that the situation in Palestine is unacceptable to anyone who has respect for human dignity. I have visited Gaza myself. I met with fishermen who are not allowed to go fishing in the waters out of Gaza. As an old fisherman myself, that hurts my heart. I met children in Gaza whose lives are made impossible by poverty, violence and a blockade that others have described as an open-door prison. I have seen for myself how the human rights of the people of the West Bank are violated every day by a man-made barrier that cuts through their roads, their lands and their lives.

When I was in Qalqilya, the words of a former statesman we all know rang in my head. Mr. Netanyahu, tear down this wall! I also know that the Israeli people are just like the rest of us. They want to live in peace, and they deserve it. The best way to ensure that is a two-State solution, which would benefit not only the Palestinian people but the Israeli people as well.

I had the pleasure of listening to Mr. Netanyahu's speech on Thursday (see A/67/PV.12), and I have a comment to make on behalf of the Icelandic people: Do not bomb Iran. Not this year, not next year. Do not start another war in the Middle East. At the same time, I say to President Ahmadinejad and the Iranian leadership: do not build a bomb. Let diplomacy work, not rabble-rousing or fear-mongering. Let us work for peace together.

We have seen fundamental changes break forth with the Arab Spring, as demonstrated by democratic elections. Democracy only matures and gets better with time, and the Arab Spring is just beginning. In a democracy everyone has a place and a role. As friends and supporters we urge everyone to ensure that the Arab Spring will advance the rights of all people, working towards societies characterized by democracy and social justice, where our sisters in the Arab world are allowed to thrive in the same way as our brothers, and where women and men enjoy equal rights.

Sadly, there is no spring in Syria. Thousands of innocent people, not least innocent children, are losing their lives because of an oppressive regime. The international community must make a stronger and better effort to seek a political and peaceful solution for the sake of those children and the people of Syria. We must also ensure that those who commit atrocities, on both sides, will at the end of the day account for their actions in an international court of law.

The Syrian problem is also a wake-up call for the United Nations with regard to the Security Council. Syria has demonstrated how archaic the Council is, and how out of tune with the needs of the modern world. The truth is that the Security Council has become an obstacle to the international efforts to address and solve situations such as that in Syria. We must reform it so as to make it a tool for, not a hindrance to, progress in situations such as that in Syria this year, or as we saw last year concerning the Palestinian application.

Let me also add on behalf of the Icelandic people that we must always oppose terrorism and violence in any form. I think that we should all unite in condemning the ghastly murder of the American Ambassador in Libya recently. Our embassies, our tools to work for the people for peace, must always be inviolable.

Iceland is an open and embracing society, and our foreign policy is based on human rights for everyone. From the point of view of human rights, it is not acceptable that anyone is persecuted or mistreated because of her or his sexual orientation or gender identity. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights guarantees equal treatment and non-discrimination to all people, and we, the community of nations, must ensure that equal treatment in every sense of that word extends as well to sexual orientation and gender identity. Let us not forget that we all, every human being, are sparks from the same sun.

Small countries can be global pioneers. Iceland demonstrated that by breaking the ice for the recognition of the Baltic States, by introducing geothermal energy as an alternative in the world's quest for clean power, and by leading by example in the fight for gender equality.

I am quite happy to relate that now, on this very morning, Iceland is embarking on a pioneering programme regarding clean renewable energy for up to 150 million Africans. Iceland has ensured funds to work with the World Bank to assist 13 countries of the East African Rift Valley to identify, research and prepare their considerable geothermal resources for utilization. That will be the greatest and most historic project Iceland ever has cooperated on with developing countries. I can express the feeling today that Iceland is very proud of it.

It may sound like a paradox, but when we in Iceland put our expertise in geothermal energy to use in East Africa, we are also protecting the environment of our own neighbourhood, the Arctic. The ice is melting at a pace far greater than we ever anticipated. We do not need to be prophets to predict that in the Arctic vast areas will open, and sooner rather than later, for new transport routes between continents and for production of oil and gas. Of course, that may bring immense commercial benefits to the people living in and around the Arctic. But we are also acutely aware of the dangers to the fragile Arctic ecosystem and to the traditional livelihood of Arctic peoples. I tell the Assembly today that we have to tread very carefully in the Arctic. It is in the interest of all nations to ensure that the Arctic Council becomes strong enough to provide, in the future, the forum for shaping important decisions on common interests of all the Arctic peoples.

Times have been pretty tough in Iceland in recent years. In the recession in Europe, we were the first country down, but we were also the first country up. If there is any lesson to be drawn from the Icelandic recovery, it is that austerity does not work on its own. Iceland certainly went through its share of austerity, but we also raised taxes, especially on the wealthiest citizens, and we used the revenue to stimulate growth and ensure that the welfare system was intact. Today, Iceland has some of the lowest unemployment in Europe and robust economic growth. The Icelandic model works.

Perhaps the best sign that Iceland is back in business is the fact that while the global recession has, sadly, led to a decline in international support for developing countries, Iceland is bucking that trend. We are increasing ours substantially.

Finally, the first letters of the themes that I have broached here today — Palestine, energy, the Arctic, climate change and the economy — form the word we should all hold dearest towards each other, whatever our differences, that is, peace.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Kairat Umarov, Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Mr. Umarov (Kazakhstan): On behalf of the Republic of Kazakhstan, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. Jeremić, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session, as well as to wish you every success. I also wish to express our appreciation to Ambassador Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, President of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session, for his skillful steering of the Assembly's proceedings.

In recent years, the world has lived through major political, social, economic and environmental upheavals. The geopolitical turmoil in the Middle East, as well as natural and man-made disasters, serve as compelling evidence indicating that the issues of security, stability and sustainable development are becoming increasingly relevant.

We believe that world politics should be based on new global principles. In the twenty-first century, those principles encompass constructive multipolarity and transparency, trust and political tolerance, and the clear pre-eminence of evolutionary forms of development of the world. They should be enshrined in the core documents of the United Nations and in the entire international law system. In that context, we believe that it is fundamentally important to ensure strict adherence to the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of Member States.

The threat of the proliferation of nuclear weapons and technology, along with the spectre of their acquisition and use by terrorist entities, has been one of the most daunting challenges to humankind. It is our strongly held view that the possession of weapons of mass destruction is not a guarantee of security or greater independence. Kazakhstan's own record shows that countries reap huge benefits from the renunciation of nuclear weapons. By voluntarily giving up the world's fourth-largest nuclear arsenal and shutting down the largest test site in Semipalatinsk, on 29 August 1991, we have won more friends and have become a more prosperous, stable and influential country.

Kazakhstan fully supports the proposal by the Secretary-General to adopt a nuclear weapons convention. Sharing its declared goals, His Excellency Mr. Nursultan A. Nazarbayev, President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, suggested that, as an important step in that direction, the United Nations should adopt a universal declaration of a nuclear-weapon-free world. That would, undoubtedly, facilitate our advancement towards a nuclear-weapon-free world and an early adoption of a nuclear weapons convention. Kazakhstan welcomes the establishment of a constructive dialogue with the five nuclear Powers with a view towards signing a protocol on negative security assurances to the State

parties to the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia.

We also call for an early establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. In that regard, we look forward to the upcoming conference in Helsinki and its positive outcomes.

Kazakhstan is working on the practical implementation of a project to host an international bank of low-enriched uranium, under the auspices of the International Atomic Energy Agency, which would allow, if need be, to ensure an uninterrupted supply of nuclear fuel. It should be made clear that the bank will in no way infringe upon the inalienable right of each State party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, including the development of nuclear technology.

This year, we will complete the project to enhance physical security of the former Semipalatinsk test site. We view this project, which is being implemented jointly with the United States and Russia, as our significant contribution to the global non-proliferation regime.

Kazakhstan is actively involved in the fight against international terrorism and drug trafficking, within the framework of the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-building Measures in Asia (CICA). As Chair of the Collective Security Treaty Organization, Kazakhstan consistently works to strengthen regional cooperation in this area. Special attention has been paid to the expansion of practical cooperation between the United Nations and regional arrangements, including, in particular, the Kazakhstan-based Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre for the fight against the threat of drug trafficking, which is designed to enhance multilateral cooperation to counter the flow of drugs from Afghanistan.

Given the increasing attention by the international community to the issue of international information security, we believe that the time has come to consider the introduction of new concepts into international law, such as electronic borders and electronic sovereignty, as well as the establishment of a cyberpolice unit.

As the current Chair of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Kazakhstan will continue to fully support the process that aims to bring stability and peace back to the region of the Middle East and North Africa.

Before I turn to regional issues, let me express our strong condemnation of the Internet video and cartoons that provocatively offend the religious feelings of Muslims. Such disgusting incitements must be stopped, because they lead to an escalation of violence by fomenting hatred between the representatives of religions, and they undermine inter-civilizational dialogue and confidence-building. The right to freedom of expression must be exercised with due responsibility.

We were shocked by the tragic killing of United States diplomats in Benghazi. We condemn attacks on diplomats and diplomatic missions and call upon Governments to adhere to their international obligations to protect diplomatic representatives in their countries.

We should support all efforts to find a peaceful solution to the conflict in Syria and assist in preventing a humanitarian disaster. We should also take measures to prevent any spillover of the crisis to the rest of the region. To that end, both the Syrian Government and the opposition should resort to diplomacy, not arms, and put an immediate end to the violence.

The principles of sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs must be respected. It is the Syrians themselves who should determine the future of their country. We call on all nations to unite around the Syrian transition process, which should be based on dialogue and compromise, and support the activities of the Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States for Syria, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi.

Kazakhstan calls for the creation of conditions to settle the Palestinian issue, including through the continuation of direct Palestinian-Israeli talks. All obstacles to the negotiation process should be removed. Kazakhstan has been and continues to be a supporter of the legitimate rights of Palestine to establish a sovereign and independent State, within the 1967 borders, and its entry into the United Nations as a full member.

We have consistently advocated a peaceful, exclusively diplomatic, resolution of the situation around the Iranian nuclear programme and look forward to the continuation of constructive dialogue between Iran and all interested parties with a view to developing mutually acceptable solutions.

The reconstruction of Afghanistan is an important objective of the international community that meets the aspirations of the Afghans themselves. We believe that,

if our cooperation on Afghanistan is to be successful, its economic dimension should be a priority. Efforts to stabilize the situation should be bolstered by reforms aimed at sustainable development and the improvement of socioeconomic indicators in the country, its level of education and other human standards.

Kazakhstan is also actively involved in multilateral cooperation to assist Afghanistan, as demonstrated by its readiness to host, in 2013 in Astana, the next conference of the Istanbul process.

Almaty, the southern megalopolis of Kazakhstan, has the necessary facilities to accommodate the offices of international organizations. Sixteen organizations of the United Nations family have already set up their offices in the city. Most of them enjoy a regional status. We promote further expansion of the presence of United Nations organizations, including its humanitarian agencies, and offer to establish a United Nations centre in Almaty, in order to effectively coordinate international efforts and implement regional projects of the United Nations, including those dealing with assistance to Afghanistan.

This year, we mark the twentieth anniversary of the initiative to convene the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-building Measures in Asia, announced by President Nursultan Nazarbayev at the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly, on 5 October 1992 (see A/47/PV.24). The anniversary session and the fourth meeting of CICA Foreign Ministers, held in Astana on 12 September, have become important milestones in the evolution of that Asian forum. Currently, the Conference brings together 24 countries that occupy over 90 per cent of the territory of Asia, where half of the world's population now resides. As a platform for dialogue, CICA has an important role to play in efforts to ensure peace, security and stability in Asia.

Kazakhstan urges that close attention be paid to the expansion of the trade, investment and transit transport capacity of least developed countries, landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) and small island developing States. To advance the interests of these groups of countries, Kazakhstan, together with the United Nations, organized, from 12 to 14 September in Almaty, the fourth meeting of LLDC Trade Ministers and the high-level global thematic meeting on international trade, trade facilitation and aid for trade.

Today, the whole world is facing new challenges to global energy security. Central Asia has great potential to become a global energy centre. The development of energy resources is a priority for the Republic of Kazakhstan. In our vision, the future of the region lies in the development of the oil and gas pipeline system to deliver our hydrocarbon resources to Europe and Asia.

As a follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and to draw the attention of the international public to the issues of renewable sources of energy, Kazakhstan has decided to seek the nomination of its capital, Astana, as the host of the international exhibition Expo 2017 on the subject of "Energy for the Future". We count on fellow Member States to support our bid. As one of the pilot countries selected from among States Members of the United Nations, Kazakhstan will actively promote the development of draft sustainable development goals for the period beyond 2015.

Kazakhstan is not only in a position to ensure its own food security; it is also willing to contribute to global food security.

Intercultural dialogue is an important prerequisite for peace and security. To promote such dialogue, Kazakhstan put forward an initiative to proclaim an International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures 2013-2022, which was adopted at the conclusion of the thirty-sixth session of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization General Conference, in November 2011.

Kazakhstan attaches special importance to the protection of human rights and has announced its bid for membership in the Human Rights Council for the period 2012-2015. If elected, Kazakhstan will participate, with a full sense of responsibility, in the proceedings of that important human rights body, on the basis of an open, impartial, non-politicized and mutually respectful dialogue between the Member States of the United Nations.

Last March, the Republic of Kazakhstan celebrated the twentieth anniversary of its membership in the United Nations. All these years, we have consistently stood for an inclusive, transparent and effective Organization. We strongly believe that it is only by uniting our efforts that we can make real progress in addressing the global issues and challenges facing humanity. We therefore call for joint efforts to seek solutions to common problems for the benefit of future generations and our common planet Earth.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Hor Namhong, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Kingdom of Cambodia.

Mr. Hor Namhong (Cambodia): On behalf of my delegation, please allow me to extend our sincere congratulations to you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. I have no doubt that under your able leadership this session will yield fruitful outcomes. I would also like to convey my admiration to Mr. Ban Ki-moon for his untiring efforts to overcome the many multifaceted challenges confronting our world today.

Let me start with the obvious. The twenty-first century we live in is facing one of its most difficult moments. Never before has the pressure of global interdependency been so intense. As economies become more and more interdependent, not only are opportunities to create wealth multiplied, but so are opportunities to transmit destabilizing shocks from one country to another. Imbalances and risks are omnipresent. In the context of declining economic prospects and mounting global challenges, collective actions are required to remedy the shortcomings of global governance in ensuring systemic financial stability, a stable monetary system and the regulation of international financial markets, and in dealing with major systemic shocks. The multilateral system, devised more than half a century ago, is facing challenges to its capacity to deliver on its mandate as the international agenda has become increasingly complex. Clearly, the current multilateral system needs to be radically reformed and made into a well-coordinated and permeable body of institutions that can deliver innovative and feasible solutions to a globalized international society.

In order to respond to systemic risk in the financial sector, we have closely cooperated with China, Japan and the Republic of Korea within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to strengthen a regional financial safeguard mechanism, called the Chiang Mai Initiative Multilateralization, which has recently increased its funding level from $120 billion to $240 billion. We strongly believe that that regional financial arrangement will complement the global firewall for regional crisis resolution. ASEAN has also established a macroeconomic and finance surveillance office in Singapore to achieve a more integrated, even-handed and effective surveillance mechanism.

As we all struggle to overcome the effects of the global financial crisis, we should not lose sight of new emerging challenges and threats, such as obstacles to sustainable development, the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), climate change, food security and so on. Many developing countries still face many obstacles to achieving all their MDGs by the target date of 2015, owing to their vulnerability to the global financial crisis, the challenges of the debt burden and the unmet commitments of official development assistance. Having achieved stable growth successively for a number of years, Cambodia is confident that, despite its limited resources, it will achieve the Cambodian MDGs by 2015. We welcome the adoption of resolution 66/288, entitled "The future we want", by the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), held in Rio de Janeiro on June 2012, and strongly advocate that the MDGs should remain a fundamental milestone in the development agenda. We also call for renewed efforts to enable the developing countries to achieve their Millennium Development Goals on time.

Climate change is a critical problem for the whole world, requiring immediate and concerted actions. The rapid pace of climate change could have devastating effects, particularly on small States in the Asia-Pacific and the Caribbean regions, in the form of rising sea levels. Other developing countries, mostly dependent on agriculture, are threatened by similar negative effects, such as extreme floods and drought, which affect their livelihood. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon described such phenomena as a real threat to international peace and security.

Regrettably, despite all the adversities inflicted on the world's most vulnerable people by climate change, the international community remains divided on implementing a rapid and critical global response. We call on developed countries to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions in accordance with the United Nations principle of common but differentiated responsibility. It is disappointing that, for the most part, the promises made by developed nations in Copenhagen in 2009, in Cancún in 2010 and in Durban in 2011 have not been fulfilled in a timely manner.

In the same vein, we are of the view that natural-disaster management and cooperation mechanisms should be further developed and strengthened at both the regional and the global levels, with a view to preventing natural disasters

and addressing related issues that have become more pressing owing to climate change. ASEAN has made great progress in that area at the regional level; the establishment of the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management, known as the AHA Centre, deserves mention in that regard.

Food security is another serious issue of the present time. At the speed the world's population is growing, the United Nations Environment Programme predicts that by 2030 we will need to produce 50 per cent more food, 30 per cent more clean water and 40 per cent more energy. Consequently, the increased competition for natural resources and between biofuel energy and food for human needs will only further exacerbate the food security situation. A major global reform is needed urgently to implement the Rio+20 recommendations on sustainable development, which emphasize both the need for major investments to modernize agriculture and encourage small-scale agricultural projects around the world and the vital importance of addressing interlinkages between energy and agricultural prices.

Rising oil and food prices are a common concern of the majority of countries in the world. High oil prices contribute to soaring food prices. Rising oil and food prices mean increased poverty levels at a time when global growth is still weak and the number of the unemployed and underemployed is continuously rising in many countries. Our modern global food system is highly oil-dependent, but petroleum is becoming less and less affordable. Thus, there is no solution yet for the world's worsening food crisis within the current energy and agricultural system. What is needed is a major rethinking of both food and energy prices and the coordination of agricultural and energy policies. We can but appeal to the world oil-producing countries to consider the negative effects of higher fuel prices and their impact on food and energy security.

In our regional context, ASEAN has adopted a comprehensive strategy on food security with the signing of the Emergency Rice Reserve Agreement with China, Japan and the Republic of Korea, which is a permanent scheme for meeting emergency requirements.

The Group of 20 (G-20) has a crucial role to play in meeting those global challenges. Cambodia, as Chair of ASEAN, appreciated the opportunity to represent ASEAN at the G-20 Summit held in Los Cabos in June. Cambodia's views reflected the need to, among other things, to sustain economic stability and structural reform for growth and employment; the urgency to improve and strengthen the international financial architecture in an interconnected global economy; the imperative of completing the Doha Round and the prevention of the return of trade protectionism; and the priority of further facilitating trade, an important conducive factor for stimulate international economic growth, which all our countries need.

Cambodia fully supports all the priorities agreed among the G-20 countries in Los Cabos to promote trade, job creation and economic growth, including their determination to finalize negotiations on the Doha Round agenda as soon as possible. International trade is one of the most important factors that will bring about economic growth and job creation in both the immediate and longer term.

Since the establishment of the United Nations, in 1945, the global situation has changed so dramatically that global diplomac urgently needs to be strengthened. It is therefore in everyone's interest to push for comprehensive reform of the United Nations so that it reflects the diverse needs and representativeness of the world today. That reform should be comprehensive and should cover not only the Security Council but also other United Nations organs in order to preserve its relevance and legitimacy as an effective global governance institution to cope with the reality of the present-day world, which is different from that of the post-Second World War era.

Mr. Benmehidi (Algeria), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The General Assembly should be further empowered to enable it to play a leading role in addressing today's global problems as a democratic, deliberative policymaking organ of the United Nations. Both the permanent and non-permanent membership of the Security Council should be equitably expanded so that it represents both developed and the developing countries.

In the spirit of the United Nations peacekeeping mission for the advancement of world peace, security and development, Cambodia has contributed 1,000 men to United Nations peacekeeping operations in Africa, especially in South Sudan and Lebanon.

Through its experience of close collaboration with the United Nations and its own experience in ending war, and thanks to its win-win policy and post-conflict management, in particular with respect to economic

and social development and national reconciliation, Cambodia wishes to contribute more effectively, through the Security Council, to the cause of peace, security and the peaceful settlement of conflicts in many parts of the world. To that end, for the very first time since joining the United Nations, in 1955, Cambodia has presented its candidature as a non-permanent member of the Security Council for the period 2013-2014, for which voting will be held next month. I also wish to note that, since 1955, Cambodia has never occupied any seat in the United Nations system and that its candidature has been endorsed and supported by all ASEAN member States.

Before I conclude, I would like to take this opportunity to stress that Cambodia deeply regrets the acts of violence against the United States Consulate in Benghazi, which caused the death of four American diplomats, including the United States Ambassador, even though we very well understand the legitimate anger at disrespect towards the Muslim religion.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan.

Mr. Zarifi (Tajikistan) (*spoke in Tajik; English text provided by the delegation*): First of all, allow me to extend to Mr. Vuk Jeremić my sincere congratulations on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. I am convinced that his extensive professional experience will contribute to the successful work of the this session of the Assembly of our universal Organization.

It is my great pleasure to convey my greetings to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and to express my country's sincere appreciation for his tireless efforts towards achieving the goals of the United Nations.

Once again, recent world developments have proved that it is impossible to address global and regional issues without strengthening the central role of the United Nations in international affairs or without collective initiatives in world politics that fully respect the norms of international law. In that regard, it has become obvious that the Organization needs rational reform, as a result of which a renewed United Nations will emerge that will be able to respond quickly and appropriately to world developments and to effectively meet the numerous global challenges and threats of the next generation.

The efforts to strengthen United Nations peacebuilding activities deserve further comprehensive support. In that regard, it is my pleasure to note that Tajikistan continues to make a considerable contribution in that area by participating in United Nations peacekeeping operations.

Tajikistan is convinced that respect for cultural and religious diversity, as well as dialogue among civilizations, is essential for global peace and understanding. In that regard, we are deeply concerned at the increase in many parts of the world of attempts to denigrate religions, in particular Islam, by misusing the freedom of expression. We strongly condemn such acts.

There is no doubt that the establishment of comprehensive legal norms on human rights is one of the major accomplishments of the United Nations. Human rights, along with peace, security and development, are the pillars of the United Nations system. As a signatory to the major international treaties on human rights, Tajikistan consistently implements measures aimed at ensuring the protection and promotion of human rights in the country.

With the intent of making a greater contribution towards the implementation of the noble goals of the Human Rights Council, the Government of Tajikistan has decided to present its candidature to that important body for the term 2015-2017. In that regard, we sincerely hope that Member States will render their valuable support to our candidature.

Within the context of the withdrawal of the International Security Assistance Force from Afghanistan, scheduled for 2014, the Afghan issue will acquire critical importance not only for the region but for the entire world. We believe that the social and economic development of Afghanistan is key to ensuring stable peace in that country. For that reason, international assistance to Afghanistan should aim first and foremost to fully restore its economy, to further strengthen its social well-being and to create employment. In that regard, the completion of projects to build railroads, motorways, power transmission lines and gas pipelines that connect Afghanistan with Tajikistan and other countries of the region is of the utmost importance.

Last March, Tajikistan hosted the fifth Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan, which submitted specific proposals and projects in various areas that will contribute to regional cooperation

and include the participation of Afghanistan. As a close neighbour of Afghanistan, Tajikistan has participated actively in the rehabilitation of the Afghan economy and the country's social infrastructure. We are convinced that the processes of multidimensional regional cooperation should fully involve Afghanistan.

The prevention of drug trafficking is one of the important areas requiring cooperative efforts on the part of the international community. It is essential that the international community coordinate measures aimed at reducing both the demand and the supply of drugs, and integrate efforts undertaken at the national level into an international strategy for drug control. Tajikistan has designed its own anti-narcotics strategy, which includes short- and long-term programmes of action, cooperation and interaction on bilateral, regional and multilateral bases, and has begun to develop a new anti-narcotics strategy for the period 2013-2020.

The Ottawa Convention calls on the international community to put an end to the suffering and casualties caused by anti-personnel mines, which kill and maim hundreds of people, mostly innocent and defenceless civilians, especially children, and that obstruct economic development and reconstruction. Regrettably, the suffering and misery that anti-personnel landmines cause is a serious burden on those citizens of my country who live along the border with neighbouring States. In that regard, we are committed to the full and effective implementation of the Convention, in cooperation with all parties concerned. Tajikistan is a strong advocate of a mine-free Central Asia.

The year 2012 will be remembered as a historic moment. Two decades after their first meeting in Rio de Janeiro, national representatives gathered there again to discuss and identify the most effective ways of achieving sustainable development. The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development reiterated our commitment to a path towards sustainable development and to ensuring an economically, socially and ecologically sustainable future for our planet: the future we want. Ensuring sustainable economic development designed to improve people's living standards and quality of life is a strategic goal of the Government of Tajikistan. We give special attention to the effective, rational and protective use of natural resources, the primary dimension of a green economy.

Making access to energy a priority is the key to achieving all the Millennium Development Goals. It is especially crucial for developing countries and remote mountain territories located far from major infrastructure. My country is no exception to that, and our access to energy is the key to social and economic development and poverty reduction. Regrettably, however, we are compelled to state that due to a lack of mutual understanding and cooperation in the region and to disregard for Tajikistan's legitimate rights and vital interests, for the past 10 years our country has suffered from a severe power shortage during the winter.

Because of its lack of other energy sources, it is vitally important for Tajikistan, which has enormous hydro-energy potential, to develop hydropower in a planned and integrated manner. According to international treaties, Tajikistan has every right to use its natural resources, including hydropower, for the benefit of its people. At the same time, we wish to make it clear from this rostrum, with full responsibility, that in developing its hydropower potential, the Republic of Tajikistan has no intention of exclusively pursuing its own interests at others' expense. On the contrary, we sincerely advocate mutually beneficial regional cooperation and partnership. It is against that backdrop that we should view Tajikistan's active cooperation with the World Bank in developing a technical, economic, social and ecological assessment of the Rogun hydropower station, a project of vital importance to my country. Similarly, we expect that while the assessment is being carried out, the parties concerned in the region will abstain from hasty and unconsidered statements and actions that may run counter to existing international agreements and to the spirit of friendship, cooperation and good neighbourliness.

Tajikistan attaches great importance to the interests of landlocked developing countries, whose location makes them vulnerable. It is obvious that Tajikistan's geographic isolation and lack of access to the sea constitute a serious obstacle to its sustainable development. Under the circumstances, it is clear that a network of reliable and unimpeded transportation and communications arteries connecting Tajikistan to the outer world via its neighbours is becoming vitally important. In that regard, we call for the elimination of any artificial and economically unsupported barriers and obstacles to transportation and communication links among the countries of the region that do not contribute to developing and strengthening regional cooperation and partnership. We hope that the relevant United Nations missions in the region will pay due attention to this issue.

In 2013, the international community will mark the International Year of Water Cooperation, initiated by Tajikistan, which coincides with the twenthieth anniversary of the proclamation of 22 March as World Water Day. To implement the goals of the International Year of Water Cooperation, Tajikistan proposes holding a number of events in 2013, including, in particular, a General Assembly thematic session and an international conference dedicated to water cooperation issues. In that regard, my country will present a draft resolution for consideration by the Second Committee. I would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere hope that Member States will support this initiative.

Tajikistan, as a strong supporter of broad and comprehensive cooperation, believes that only collective, coordinated efforts and effective regional and international cooperation can serve as a foundation for joint success, render the world a better and safer place and make the lives of the people of our planet happier and more dignified.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Mourad Medelci, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic People's Republic of Algeria.

Mr. Medelci (Algeria) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to take this opportunity to warmly congratulate President Vuk Jeremić on his election to the presidency of the Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. I also pay tribute to his predecessor, Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, for his efforts during his tenure. I would also like to commend the continuing commitment and efforts of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

Today our world faces a complex turning point in its history, replete with challenges and opportunities. The deep geopolitical upheavals in our region and the serious problems resulting from the economic and financial crisis attest to that.

We believe that our collective faith in multilateralism will help us to unite our efforts to find solutions and overcome the persistent uncertainty that has resulted from those changes. The unprecedented extent of our problems may risk worsening the existing imbalances in relations among nations. All of us, without exception, bear a responsibility for the future of our planet, which we would like to be more just and more united.

No country has been spared the consequences of the global crisis, and their management cannot be considered by only a small number of States acting to the exclusion of the rest. Quite the contrary, we all have the right to participate in finding solutions. The slowdown in the world's economy negatively affects many countries, including those of the developed world, which are facing a sovereign debt crisis and increasing unemployment. Therefore, further efforts are called for to prevent such situations from spilling over to other regions of the world, in particular to Africa. The response to the challenges of the crisis rests with our capacity to find alternatives to the theories and practices of the past, because the new realities of our times require urgent implementation of appropriate and more effective approaches and mechanisms for addressing the crisis.

As in previous years, we continue to suffer from the effects of the multidimensional crisis, whether in economic governance or in political coordination. In fact, the return of trust and growth should lead us to step up our efforts to coordinate between the United Nations and multilateral institutions in the economic and financial fields. The United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions should complement each other and act in complete political and economic coordination and harmony.

As far as we are concerned, Algeria has shouldered its share of responsibility. It has made enormous sacrifices and continues to rigorously control and manage its expenditures. The fiscal surplus that we have achieved has allowed us to adopt a revived social policy under our five-year plan 2010-2014 that involves redistributing wealth while maintaining investments for economic growth.

Algeria has always called for combating the causes and not just the consequences of instability. We have insisted on the important fact that development and peace and security are interrelated, and that the strategies of the United Nations and, in particular, the Security Council, for lasting peace must be thought of in harmony with socioeconomic development policies.

In that regard, at the regional level, Algeria is contributing to the process of democratization and the promotion of the rule of law and socioeconomic development. The fight against hunger and poverty, the protection of food security, agriculture, growth, infrastructure, energy and renewable energy are areas in which we cooperate with countries of the Maghreb and the Sahel. Along the same lines, Algeria is sharing with African and Arab countries and with its other partners its experience in the area of fighting terrorism

and the interrelated scourges of organized crime and illicit trafficking in drugs and weapons, which are widespread our region.

Algeria welcomes the recent changes in some countries of North Africa and the Middle East that reflected the will of their peoples, who are searching for a democratic ideal, justice and dignity. Those are, in fact, the founding principles of the Algerian revolution. Committed to the principle of self-determination of peoples and mutual respect among nations, Algeria condemns all forms of violence and repression, wherever they arise. We will continue to believe that dialogue and negotiation are the best means for settling disputes.

Algeria hopes that the people of Western Sahara will exercise their right to self-determination. We urge Morocco and the Frente Polisario to act in good faith and initiate formal talks, under the auspices of the United Nations, with a view to reaching a just and lasting solution, pursuant to the norms and provisions of international law.

The search for peace, security and development is a priority for us all. That commitment was formally reaffirmed by the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement, including Algeria, at the Movement's sixteenth summit, held in Tehran last August.

We support the commitment of the United Nations to conflict prevention through its unflagging diplomatic efforts, and we appreciate our Organization's role in promoting appropriate solutions to major crises within the context of its tireless and comprehensive efforts to bring about development.

Algeria is a member of the special joint committee of the United Nations and the League of Arab States to monitor the Syrian crisis. We supported Mr. Kofi Annan and we will do the same with his successor, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, with a view to reaching a political solution to the acute crisis that is unfolding within that fraternal country.

In our region today, we are facing new risks and threats that point to a return of terrorism in its more violent manifestations, along with its interrelated scourges of organized crime and trafficking in drugs and weapons. It is in that context that we have to consider the complex situation in brotherly Mali. That crisis seriously threatens the security of the countries of the Sahel. In fact the deep, root causes of the situation can be attributed to the ills of severe underdevelopment and abject poverty. Algeria acts in concert with the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States and other regional actors concerned with a view to reaching a peaceful and lasting settlement of the crisis in Mali.

The roles played by the General Assembly and the Security Council are essential for the preservation and building of peace throughout the world and for the realization of the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter in the areas of international cooperation and development. Moreover, the missions of those two principal and complementary organs are based on legitimacy, contrary to the deadlock in the reform process that began years ago. We must therefore do everything possible to ensure that the General Assembly, the most representative organ of the United Nations, reclaims all its competence in that context. The working methods and membership of the Security Council must be revised to ensure its democratization in terms of new permanent and non-permanent members from the developing world, in particular from Africa, the cradle of civilization.

Algeria is proud to celebrate this year the fiftieth anniversary of its independence and of its membership of the United Nations. Faithful to its principles, Algeria has made a wise contribution to the complete decolonization of Africa. Today it enjoys peace with its neighbours with a view to completing the process of regional integration. Algeria would like to become a member of the Human Rights Council, for which it is a candidate for the period 2014-2016, in order to continue defending the values on which its history and its determination to overcome adversity is based.

Everyone knows that the road of human rights is littered with many pitfalls and obstacles, such as authoritarianism, xenophobia, poverty, discrimination and unilateral economic sanctions. In that regard, the embargo on Cuba, which has lasted for more than half a century and has created deprivation, is both unfair and anachronistic.

Furthermore, attacks on Islam and Muslims are a violation of human rights and a threat to peaceful coexistence among peoples. We should all fight against the phenomenon of Islamophobia, which is based on a xenophobic ideology that erroneously likens Islam to terrorism. That phenomenon must be fought. In that context, the tragic events engendered by the infamous video concerning Islam and its Prophet are reprehensible in many respects. Similary, Algeria condemns acts of

violence perpetrated against diplomatic officers and missions, which are vehicles for friendly relations and cooperation among peoples. Algeria proposes an initiative under the auspices of the United Nations to identify the ways and means to organize a response that puts an end to such hateful events, which threaten international peace and security. In that regard, we cannot forget that the appropriate and responsible use of freedom of expression should also endow our world with a more human and brotherly face through the promotion of dialogue among religions and cultures.

At the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly, Algeria would like to welcome the State of Palestine as a new Member of the United Nations family, recognized within its 1967 borders, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. We believe that the time has come for Palestine to be fully represented at the centre of this irreplaceable international forum, the United Nations. Recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people to sovereignty and self-determination is an inalienable right and a necessary precondition for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East, which is currently being prevented by the Israeli policy of occupation.

In addition, the creation of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East is an important confidence-building measure. In that regard, we support the efforts of the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of Finland, Jaakko Laajava, as facilitator for the conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction, to be held before the end of this year in Helsinki.

Algeria is committed to a global and ambitious agreement to protect the environment and promote sustainable development. In that regard, we are grateful to the Group of 77 and China, which we have the honour to preside over this year, for its constant support and cooperation, which has made it possible to achieve the results of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, the strengthening of the Nairobi Work Programme and the preparations for the next conferences on climate change and biodiversity. Algeria urges Member States to shoulder their responsibilities in implementing the commitments entered into under the concept of common but differentiated responsibility, that is, namely, the financing of the transfer of know-how, technology and capacity-building in the area of sustainable development.

The President of the Republic, Mr. Abdelaziz Bouteflika, has given new impetus to the programme of reforms aimed at strengthening the democratic process, the rule of law and the advancement of women. The legislative elections of 10 May 2012 yielded a significant increase in women's representation, with 146 women Members of Parliament, representing one third of the Lower Chamber.

Our country has made tangible progress in the political, economic and social areas, and we continue our efforts to establish and consolidate our democratic freedoms based on the principle of equal opportunity embodied in our Constitution. Those steps have enabled our country to achieve in general the Millennium Development Goals prior to 2015. That led to Algeria being chosen as one of the 50 countries selected by the United Nations for consultations on the Millennium Development Goals and the post-2015 development agenda.

In conclusion, I thank members for their attention and wish them every success in the work of our session.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Oldemiro Marques Balói, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Republic of Mozambique.

Mr. Balói (Mozambique) (*spoke in Portuguese; English text provided by the delegation*): It is a great honour to address the General Assembly. I would like to join other speakers in congratulating His Excellency Mr. Vuk Jeremić on his election to preside over the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. I am sure that his diplomatic experience will contribute to the success of the work of this session. I assure him of the full commitment of the Mozambican delegation to contributing to the success of this session. I equally congratulate his predecessor, His Excellency Ambassador Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser of Qatar, for his commitment and dedication in leading the Assembly at its most recent session.

I would also like to share with the Assembly our satisfaction at the progress made during the most recent session's debate, held under the theme "The role of mediation in the peaceful resolution of disputes". That theme merited special attention by the international community in various forums and was highlighted by the adoption, last May, of the Helsinki final document, which defines the principles regarding the role of the States in the mediation of disputes. The Helsinki

document and the Manila Declaration on the Peaceful Settlement of International Disputes, adopted in 1982, which set a precedent for the peaceful resolution of international disputes, represent a strengthening of the principles that guide States' actions in the search for solutions to disputes through peaceful means.

We salute the timely choice of the theme "Bringing about adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means" for this session, at a time when various factors are hastening the advent of conflict. Those factors, both internal and external in nature, are due to political and/or economic factors. They include the quest for self-determination, socio-political exclusion, the use of natural resources, wealth distribution, border disputes and cultural and religious intolerance.

Therefore, we believe that conflict resolution processes should prioritize a holistic approach to resolving conflict, through a free and ongoing dialogue among the parties to a conflict, thereby following universally accepted principles such as dialogue based on truth and the responsibility of the major stakeholders at the national, regional and international levels; participation aimed at reaching real solutions and sustainable development based on an understanding of the need to strengthen the synergies between peace, development and democracy; and the fight against poverty and promotion of sustainable development.

The importance we attribute to these principles stems from our experience in a process of reconciliation and peacekeeping, in which a constant and interactive dialogue within Mozambican society has allowed for the consolidation of national unity, peace, development and the fight against poverty so as to further participatory democracy.

It is therefore with pride that, on October 4, Mozambique will celebrate 20 years of peace in an atmosphere of stability and economic growth, accomplishments that are the result of an inclusive dialogue, a process of national reconciliation and our observance of the principles of democracy, freedom and justice.

The failure of preventive measures leads us to resort to mechanisms for conflict management and resolution. For those mechanisms to be successful, we need to re-evaluate the mandates of, and conventional approaches to, peacekeeping operations, given the underlying changes that have come about in the actual nature of conflict itself since the establishment of the United Nations. Given the multidimensional nature of current conflicts, efforts aimed at their prevention, management and resolution require the cooperation of various stakeholders at the national, regional and international levels under Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter.

We believe that success in the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts is directly linked to an understanding of their nature. The scope and facilitation of mediation should be extensively informed by the nature and dynamic of the particular conflict, so as to allow for a better analysis and effective action and to ensure that all parties to the conflict take an integral role in its resolution. In order to pursue these objectives, focus should be placed on cooperation with regional and subregional organizations.

We note with concern the persistence of an environment of tension and instability in Africa, in particular in Madagascar, the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea-Bissau, Somalia, the Sudan, South Sudan and Mali.

In the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region, the various conflict resolution processes are based on a regional architecture for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts. This is substantiated within the SADC organ for cooperation in the political, defence and security areas by instruments that create the conditions for dialogue. To facilitate its intervention in this area, the SADC organ created a mediation unit that is based on the participation of a group of elders who, through their deep knowledge of the internal dynamics of the countries referred, have been contributing to peacebuilding, security and stability in the SADC region.

The SADC Summit of Heads of State and of Government recently held in Maputo in August thoroughly examined ways to improve the organization's intervention in the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts. SADC thus reiterated its commitment to working with the parties to the conflicts in the Republic of Madagascar, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Republic of Zimbabwe while at the same time reinforcing its partnership with the international community.

The mediation efforts of SADC for the resolution of the political deadlock in Madagascar and the SADC facilitation of the implementation of the comprehensive

political agreement in Zimbabwe, continue to make progress towards the establishment of conditions for free, fair and credible elections to take place in both SADC countries.

With regard to Madagascar, the efforts of the mediation team led by the former President of the Republic of Mozambique, Joaquim Chissano, resulted in the signing by 10 of the 11 political groups in Madagascar of the SADC road map to end the political crisis in that country.

In Zimbabwe, the political situation is generally stable, as the inclusive Government has made tremendous progress in the socioeconomic and political areas. The process for the establishment of a new constitution, which will guide future elections, is at an advanced stage.

SADC reiterates its appeal for the complete lifting of the economic sanctions imposed on Zimbabwe in order to contribute to the country's economic recovery and that of other countries in the region, with which Zimbabwe maintains close economic ties.

However, SADC and the international community continue to be concerned with the prevailing climate of instability and the subsequent humanitarian crises in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Cooperation mechanisms among SADC, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the African Union and the United Nations and, above all, extensive comprehensive internal dialogue among the Congolese are needed in seeking lasting solutions to the instability in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

With regard to Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, as Chair of the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, continues to be committed to seeking a viable solution in order to restore constitutional order to that country through internal dialogue and the coordinated intervention of the international community. The people of Guinea-Bissau yearn for peace, stability and development. They want to be the masters of their own destiny, which was why they fought for liberation. That culminated in the country's independence, whose thirty-ninth anniversary was celebrated on 24 September.

Regarding Somalia, the Sudan and South Sudan, Mozambique is delighted by the progress in the respective political processes. We are confident that such achievements will contribute to lasting peace and stability in those countries.

We follow with concern the lack of progress in seeking viable solutions to the political process in the Middle East. That process is a challenge not only for the countries involved and for the region, but also for the world at large, owing to its implications for international peace and security. We therefore appeal to all relevant actors to engage in a constructive dialogue and to work towards a peaceful solution that guarantees peace, security and stability.

We reiterate our belief in the importance of the ongoing commitment of the United Nations towards the prompt implementation of the relevant resolutions of the Organization. We further reiterate that internal dialogue, regional cooperation and the realistic intervention of the United Nations must be the priorities.

We reaffirm our unequivocal support for the cause of the Palestinian people, who have been denied their inalienable right to self-determination. We fully support the principle of establishing the two States of Palestine and Israel living side by side in peace.

Similarly, we reaffirm our support for the international community's engagement in seeking a sustainable solution to the issue of the Western Sahara's self-determination. We cannot understand or accept the delays in conducting the referendum already agreed on by all parties under the auspices of the United Nations.

Mozambique continues to follow with concern the maintenance of the unjust economic embargo against Cuba, which impedes the economic and social development of that sisterly country. Mozambique therefore reiterates the call of the majority of Member States for the immediate lifting of the embargo.

The nature of the challenges that we face in the area of international peace and security lead us to affirm before the Assembly the increasing relevance of multilateral mechanisms for the peaceful resolution of disputes or situations of conflict. We note with satisfaction that, throughout more than a half a century of its existence, the United Nations has made undeniable achievements in the maintenance of peace and in the prevention and resolution of conflicts.

In order to more effectively respond to the growing challenges to resolving conflicts, we must pursue more resolutely the reform agenda of the United Nations system, in particular Security Council reform and the

revitalization of the General Assembly. In that task, we believe that those two organs must adopt the following approach. The steps should include a comprehensive strategic plan of action and a detailed programme to address conflict situations; strengthening the capacity of resource mobilization for peacekeeping missions; the negotiation and implementation of sustainable political solutions; and engaging in a long-term perspective. The Security Council must play a more proactive role in the solution of conflicts by, inter alia, fully implementing the resolutions that it adopts.

We therefore reiterate the validity and relevance of the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter and of other international instruments. Such values must remain the main source of inspiration in the pursuit of political and lasting solutions to conflicts. Mozambique thus believes that multilateral organizations, such as the United Nations, the African Union and other subregional organizations, play a fundamental role in the pursuit of peace and development.

The resolution of conflicts is a crucial condition for the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, in particular by African countries and least developed countries. In that context, as part of the ongoing discussions on establishing a post-2015 development agenda, Member States must act jointly in seeking points of convergence that will make it possible to adopt consensus and sustainable solutions for the well-being of our people.

In that connection, we would like to express our optimism over the consensus understanding reached at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. We are aware of the fact that the success of such an agreement depends on an integrated approach towards the economic, social, cultural and environmental components, as well as on defining a comprehensive framework for resource mobilization under the terms of the common vision of resolution 66/288, entitled "The future we want".

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate Mozambique's commitment to continuing to cooperate with the United Nations in seeking peaceful solutions to conflicts and to peace, stability and sustainable development.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Anifah Aman, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Malaysia.

Mr. Aman (Malaysia): At the outset, allow me to congratulate Mr. Jeremić on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. I am confident that he will successfully steer the proceedings of this session in an efficient and effective manner. I assure him of Malaysia's full cooperation and support throughout his presidency. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the previous President, His Excellency Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, for his leadership and guidance throughout the sixty-sixth session.

The release of the distasteful and insulting film *Innocence of Muslims* caused a wave of widespread protests across the Muslim world. The problem was compounded by the publication of offensive caricatures, which further angered Muslims. It is hard to understand how those responsible could resort to such actions, knowing that they would offend and provoke 2 billion Muslims, as anything other than blatant and malicious intent and purpose.

It is our obligation as peace-loving people and responsible Governments to prevent a small minority of bigots from sowing the seed of hatred between Muslims and the Western world. We categorize those people as extremists. They insult Islam and advocate religious hatred. Such extremists have shown absolutely no regard for the implications of their actions. While we condemn the irresponsible actions of those who intentionally incite hatred, we are equally saddened by the violent reaction that ensued.

Expressing anger by resorting to violence, killing and destruction does not offer any solution to the problem and only results in further division and possibly more damage and loss of innocent lives.

We condemn those responsible for the death of Ambassador Christopher Stevens and his colleagues in Benghazi. We are equally saddened by the loss of innocent lives, including those of women and children, during emotionally charged demonstrations. A life lost is one too many. Those who made the video and drew the caricatures, as well as those who resorted to killing, are equally guilty of extremism and must be held accountable and brought to justice.

I believe that it is time to look deeper into the heart of the problem and dwell on the real debate — the relationship between freedom of expression and social responsibilities, duties and obligations. The events we have witnessed cannot be defended under the pretext of

human rights, freedoms and liberties. A line should be drawn when the prejudicial effect outweighs everything else. Malaysia has always maintained that freedom, including the freedom of expression, comes with responsibility. The drafters of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, I am sure, did not have denigration in mind when they cited the need to promote and protect the freedom of expression.

Human rights need to be guaranteed by taking into account the cultural and historical sensitivities of a society. Nevertheless, they should also be applied without selectivity or discrimination. When we discriminate against women, it is called sexism; when African-Americans are criticized and vilified, it is called racism; when the same is done to the Jews, people call it anti-Semitism; and laws are legislated to persecute the perpetrators. But why is it that when Muslims are stigmatized and defamed, it is defended as freedom of expression?

In his statement during the International Day of Peace on 21 September, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon rightly said: "We cannot let the voices of extremists dominate the debate and inflame tensions. We need voices of moderation and solidarity" (*SG/SM/14522*). The Prime Minister of Malaysia, two years ago in the Assembly, advocated a global movement of moderates and called for all people of the world to join the chorus of moderates so as to drown out the voices of extremists. Embracing moderation is an important value that should be ingrained in every society. Moderation comes with a high degree of tolerance, trust and mutual understanding. It uses dialogue as an important tool to resolve disputes. With relative political peace comes economic stability and socioeconomic development in the given country. It is therefore important that we continue to practice moderation as we face the rising tide of extremism. Moderation is the best response to extremism.

The first international conference of the Global Movement of Moderates held in Kuala Lumpur in January this year was well attended by over 500 participants from all over the world. It affirmed the importance of moderation in the context of its application to global issues and situations, especially to matters that relate to social, financial, religious and international politics. The Global Movement of Moderates has gained the recognition and support of the Commonwealth of Nations, the Non-Aligned Movement and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. We believe that the Global Movement of Moderates provides an effective platform for the global response to extremism.

The theme of the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly, "Bringing about adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means," is timely because it reiterates the core principles and values of the United Nations in facing continuing conflicts and situations around the world.

We continue to have serious concerns regarding the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic. We condemn the violence and senseless killing that have taken place and that continue to take place. As we contemplate the next step forward, we have to bear in mind that any measure we take must be in the interests of the Syrian people. It is not about who is wrong or right; it is about putting an end to the bloodshed and suffering, bringing a peaceful and inclusive resolution to the conflict.

The unabated violence and killing must stop immediately. The parties involved have an equal responsibility for ensuring the end to the appalling atrocities. Military aggression and armed confrontation will serve only to exacerbate the problem and can never be a solution to the crisis; instead, they diminish any little hope there is for peaceful settlement. We earnestly hope that with the appointment of Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi as the new Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States for Syria, a peaceful solution to the Syrian crisis will be found. Towards that end, the support of all parties, including the involvement of the United Nations, is very crucial.

The situation in the occupied Palestinian territories remains bleak. For more than six decades, day after day, month after month, the people of Palestine have continued to see their lands confiscated to make way for illegal settlements. They have continued to see their families, including their children, displaced and forced from their homes. Elsewhere, we are quick in calling for action against those who force others to live under oppression and without freedom and dignity. But we are unashamed in not taking strong and decisive action to ensure that the long-deprived Palestinians can exercise their right to their homeland and regain their dignity within the community of nations.

Surely, the international community, especially the more powerful and influential nations, could do more to bring Israel to the negotiating table for a two-State solution, whereby the State of Israel and the State of

Palestine could exist side by side in peace and security. How can we continue to live in the face of that glaring injustice without feeling an iota of guilt for not doing enough to bring to an end this long-standing issue?

Like others in this Hall, Malaysia welcomes the convening of the inaugural High-level Meeting on the Rule of Law held earlier this week. At that meeting, we adopted a solemn Declaration that the rule of law shall apply to all States equally (resolution 67/1). We rededicated ourselves to resolving disputes by peaceful means and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law. We also committed ourselves to upholding the right to self-determination of peoples who remain under foreign occupation, and to end impunity for violations of international humanitarian and human rights law. With that declaration, it is time for the international community to put pressure on Israel to fulfil its international obligations.

At the same time, Israel must stop all illegal settlement activities in the West Bank as well as in East Jerusalem. We are particularly concerned by the threats to invade or divide the site of Al-Aqsa Mosque, which would be a breach of Israel's obligations as an occupying Power. It is a holy site for Muslims and Christians alike. Furthermore, Israel must lift the illegal blockade over Gaza that has caused too much hardship for the people. It must also protect the people under its occupation, fulfil its international obligations and respect international law. Most importantly, it ought to have direct talks with the Palestinian Authority in conditions that clearly demonstrate its goodwill and sincerity. A peaceful two-State solution, accompanied by sustainable peace in the region, should be the ultimate goal for all concerned.

Recognizing Palestine and welcoming it into the community of nations has become a contentious issue. Palestine is punished for wanting to become a rightful Member of the United Nations. The feasibility of a two-State solution is being questioned. However, what choice does Palestine have? Furthermore, how would becoming a Member of the United Nations harm Palestine's sincere efforts for independence?

The issue of Palestine's membership of the United Nations is tied to another bigger issue that is of particular concern to Malaysia. Allow me to elaborate. One hundred and thirty-two countries recognize the State of Palestine. That number reflects more than two thirds of the membership of the United Nations. Yet, the Security Council — or more accurately, those members on which veto power has been conferred — are given the authority to determine the fate of Palestine's membership, irrespective of the opinions of the majority.

That is just one of a host of reasons that the United Nations, especially the Security Council, needs to be reformed. The Security Council will need to be able to cope with the many challenges that the international community faces.

There are so many instances when it has failed to take action when action was needed most. It has failed to do so because of the veto power that has been conferred on the five permanent members. Thus, time and again, it has become the victim of its own creation.

The composition of the Security Council should also reflect current global realities. It should be democratic and accountable so as to be able to fulfil its mandate to effectively maintain international peace and security. It is ironic that the very institution that was formed in 1945 to promote and defend democracy among its Member States should itself be undemocratic.

Virtually every aspect of reform has been argued one way or another. There have been many proposals on the table, but none has made any headway. Therefore, despite the many years that the issue of Security Council reform has been on the agenda of the United Nations, we are no closer to actual reform than when we first started. We call on all Member States to be realistic and to find workable solutions to reform. There is a need to approach reform with renewed political will if we genuinely want to see progress towards achieving a more efficient and effective United Nations. How long can we go on like this? How long can we avoid the need to reform the Security Council as well as the United Nations as a whole?

It would be remiss of me not to mention the meeting that many consider the most important one to have taken place this year — namely, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in Brazil last June. Although the summit is over, much work remains. The actions mandated in the outcome document need our close follow-up, monitoring and participation for their successful implementation. Strengthening sustainable development and environmental institutions, formulating a financial strategy and developing the mechanisms for facilitating technology transfer are among the important areas on which we need to act in the year ahead. Accordingly,

we need to launch a process to determine sustainable development goals. The goals should be supported by concrete action plans, with details on the various areas mentioned in order to implement them. Malaysia looks forward to working constructively and contributing to that process.

I believe that we share similar concerns on all the issues I have raised today. Bringing about adjustment or settlement of disputes or situations does not concern only the parties involved in a dispute or situation, but is the joint collective responsibility of the international community. In line with this year's theme, we assure the Assembly of our commitment to ensuring lasting global peace and security through peaceful means by embracing the principles of moderation.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Murray McCully, Minister for Foreign Affairs of New Zealand.

Mr. McCully (New Zealand): I bring greetings from the South Pacific. For the past year, New Zealand has had the privilege of chairing the Pacific Islands Forum, a regional body that represents some of the smallest and most vulnerable States on this planet. For us that has been an important responsibility.

Because we are a small country with modest resources, we choose to focus much of our attention on our own region. Over 60 per cent of our official development assistance is spent in our own neighbourhood. Serving as Chair of the Pacific Islands Forum has caused us to reflect on the role of regional organizations, and also on the extent to which we all depend on the United Nations for solutions to challenges that are truly global in character. I say with some confidence that we have been making good progress in dealing with those challenges that are capable of regional solutions.

But I must also say that we need and expect more from this institution. The Pacific Islands Forum has 16 members, of which 16 are small island States. I was pleased this week to attend the first meeting between the Secretary-General and Pacific Islands Forum leaders, which I hope will mark a new era of enhanced high-level engagement between this Organization and our region and a greater understanding of our needs.

The Pacific has had its share of stability and security challenges in recent times. As a region, we have done reasonably well in dealing with them. Most recently it has been in Solomon Islands that a regional initiative has been required. The Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands has involved a truly regional approach, with the participation of police and other personnel from every member of the Pacific Islands Forum. I am pleased to report that the security element of that initiative has been significantly scaled down and will soon be fully withdrawn. But there is also more that this Organization, particularly the Security Council, can do to acknowledge and support regional leadership on peace and security matters in the Pacific and elsewhere.

Concerns about democracy, the rule of law and human rights are not mere abstract considerations within the Pacific. Those principles have been challenged in a number of States, most notably, in recent years, in Fiji. In that respect, I am pleased to report that progress is being made towards the holding of elections in 2014, and that support has been forthcoming to ensure that such elections are free and fair.

Stability and security issues are not the only priorities for our regional body. In our year as Forum Chair, New Zealand chose to focus on a number of development priorities, two of which I wish to mention in my remarks today.

For many of the poorer States within our region, their fisheries resource is the major economic asset they hold. Yet due to illegal fishing practices, unreported catch and inadequate management practices, those countries have received far too small a return on that resource. Because of the highly migratory character of the tuna resource, this is truly a matter requiring regional management. Solid progress is being made in such areas as improved surveillance, the training of monitors and improved management practices, both to protect the last really healthy fishery on the planet and to ensure that its owners receive a fair share of the resource they own.

One of the highest priorities within our region is the need for practical initiatives in the area of renewable energy. Ours is a region heavily dependent upon fossil fuels for the generation of electricity. The cost of expensive imported diesel in most small Pacific economies is absolutely crippling. The climate change impact is obvious.

After a decade of climate change conferences and hundreds of millions of dollars in so-called climate change initiatives, one might be forgiven for imagining

that the Pacific, overendowed as it is with good sunlight, would by now be positively festooned with solar power plants. Sadly, I must report that that is not in fact the case. Indeed, one of the most striking features of our region has been the complete lack of progress in putting lofty climate change rhetoric into any form of renewable energy practice.

In our year in the Chair of the regional body we have set out to correct that serious shortcoming. A small but important illustration lies in our work in the tiny Tokelau Islands. Until now, Tokelau has been 100 per cent dependent on fossil fuels for the generation of electricity. By the end 2012, Tokelau will be over 90 per cent resourced with renewable solar electricity.

Good progress has also been made in Tonga, where I recently participated in the opening of a solar power plant supplying around 20 per cent of the electricity requirements of the main island, Tongatapu. And we are working with the Cook Islands Government, too, to assist in meeting their bold aspiration to 50 per cent renewable electricity by 2015, mostly through solar initiatives.

These New Zealand-funded programmes are an important part of our overall commitment to our region. Our parting legacy from our year as Chair of the regional body is a renewable-energy pledging conference to be held early next year, with the objective of matching donors, suppliers of concessional and commercial finance, and others with the renewable energy plans of our Pacific neighbours. Here I should acknowledge the European Union's commitment in co-leading this initiative, as well as the support of the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and the Governments of Australia, the United States and other generous supporters.

While there is much that can be achieved by regional action, we must acknowledge that sometimes regional solutions are just not enough. That goes right to the very heart of the reason for the existence of this Organization. My point is most vividly illustrated today in relation to Syria. It would be difficult for me to overstate the level of frustration of the people I represent with the complete inability of the Security Council to act in relation to Syria. And it would be even more difficult to overstate the extent to which the Security Council is at risk of losing its credibility in the eyes of reasonable and fair-minded people through its inability to act.

People in my country ask a very simple question: If 25,000 deaths, countless thousands injured and many more displaced and homeless are not enough to get the Security Council to act, then what does it take? Just what does it take? I welcome the leadership that the Arab League and Arab States have shown on this issue, and we have seen similar leadership from them on other difficult issues in their region. And I welcome the fact that the General Assembly has been looking for opportunities to be more engaged. In the absence of leadership from the Security Council, I suggest that the Assembly must find ways to play a more activist role.

But from all of this, the case for Security Council reform has become utterly compelling. Indeed, increasingly, the future credibility of the United Nations may depend on it. If we are to make progress in this area we will need to see Members move past the extravagant attempts to maximize individual positions and try to find some meaningful, practical reforms that actually hold the prospect of widespread support.

I represent a small nation of practical, constructive people. And it is because we seek practical, constructive reform that our Government supports the so-called intermediate solution: the creation of a new category of seat for the group of larger countries that feel underrepresented in comparison with the five permanent members of the Security Council (P-5), but seats that they would have to win in open elections so as to make them fully accountable to the broader membership.

I do not intend in these remarks to discuss any other specific proposals we would like to see considered, with one exception. There are now compelling reasons for us to ask the P-5 to voluntarily accept restrictions on the use of the veto. To go further and to seek its abolition is pointless; it simply will not happen. But to ask the P-5 to acknowledge and respect the genuine concerns of the wider membership by voluntarily accepting a curb on the exercise of the veto is an entirely reasonable and achievable objective.

My country was one of those that led the opposition to the veto when the Organization was being established; indeed, it was the only Charter issue that was forced to a vote. The permanent members argued at that stage that the veto was necessary in order to protect their vital national interests. Yet today we routinely see the veto exercised in circumstances that have little to do with national interests. My request to the five permanent

members is simply that they stick with what they said to us back in 1945. And my challenge to them today is to consider a process by which they collectively and voluntarily agree to confine their use of the veto to those issues that clearly and directly affect their vital national interests; and also that they voluntarily agree not to use their veto in situations that involve mass atrocities.

While on the topic of the Security Council, I would like to take the opportunity to urge the Council and the relevant organs of the General Assembly to respond positively to the requests from the Economic Community of West African States for support in dealing with the conflict in Mali and the Sahel. Too often we have seen the Council fail to respond in a timely way to requests for help — in Rwanda, in Guinea, in Darfur and in Somalia. Too often it has been a case of too little, too late. In all of these cases we have seen good leadership from within the African Union, and that leadership deserves a timely and constructive response from New York.

Many of those here will be aware that New Zealand is an energetic candidate for election to the Security Council for the term from 2015-2016. I can assure the Assembly that it will hear more from us on these topics over the next two years. We are a small country with a big voice and an approach that is fair-minded and constructive.

In the past few days. the Assembly has heard from both Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Abbas. We are now on notice that the issue of Palestinian status in the United Nations will come before the Assembly during this session. We look forward to seeing the text of a draft resolution and to engaging in the consultations that have been signaled to us. I said earlier that New Zealanders are practical and constructive. They are also fair-minded people; they expect to see their Government bring all of those attributes to the consideration of such a resolution, and that we will surely do. Having said that, let me also be clear that we see such a resolution as a very poor substitute for the direct discussions that should occur between two leaders who live half an hour down the road from each other.

In his address to the Assembly earlier in the week (see A/67/PV.12), Prime Minister Netanyahu set out clearly the grave implications for the Middle East, and for the global community more generally, of a nuclear breakout in the region. Like other Member States, New Zealand believes Iran must be told to step back from a course that risks further dangerous escalation of the situation. We hope the international community will stand firm in sending that sort of message. In return, however, I suggest that it is fair for the international community to make a request of Prime Minister Netanyahu. And that is to put the settlements on hold, at the very least while negotiations proceed, and to engage in the direct talks with his Palestinian counterpart that represent the only basis for a durable solution to this issue, and an essential step in removing the seeds of wider conflict within the region.

I would like to remind the Assembly that these are very difficult times for Governments around the world. Budget economies have affected foreign ministries, my own included. It is only fair that we should in turn ask this large institution to find economies and improve working methods in order to deliver better value for our taxpayers. Smaller countries, like New Zealand, depend more than most on good multilateral institutions. We need a United Nations that is modern, efficient and able to meet changing needs. We all need a Security Council that is more responsive to the needs of the wider membership and more effective in dealing with the significant challenges that we all confront today.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Frederick A. Mitchell, MP, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Immigration of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas.

Mr. Mitchell (Bahamas): I wish to say, before my printed remarks begin, some words not circulated in the text. It is a particular privilege and honour to represent my country in this forum, having returned here through the magic of democracy after five years. For the first time since the general election in May, our country now reaffirms its re-engagement in and with the world community. We are part of the larger Caribbean region, and in that context we took part in a meeting with the Secretary-General of this body. We thank him for his courtesy.

However, it is important that the representation of the Bahamas on regional engagement with the United Nations not be misinterpreted as a complaint about lack of attention by the Secretariat. It was not based on petulance but on the simple fact that the United Nations in all its organs and manifestations must live up to its creed that all nations in this body are equal, and not

create the impression that some are more equal than others. Our delegation will continue to ensure that the guiding principle of that equality and equity is adhered to strictly.

I would like to congratulate Mr. Vuk Jeremić on his assumption of his duties as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session and to assure him of my delegation's support and cooperation throughout. I also commend his predecessor for his stewardship over the previous session.

I also wish on this occasion to express thanks for the stellar work and contribution to our country of our Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Ambassador Paulette A. Bethel.

The Bahamas commends the United Nations for the convening and the outcome of the High-level Meeting on the Rule of Law at the National and International Levels last Monday. The Bahamas has committed itself to the principle of the rule of law and to ensuring the continuation of good governance for the benefit of the entire populace of the Bahamas. The Bahamas is committed also to adhering to the rule at law at the international level and to upholding the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

The Bahamas commends the convening in June 2012 of the third biennial review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. The Bahamas unequivocally condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and reiterates its commitment to the fight against terrorism and to the Strategy's full implementation. The Bahamas renews its call for the timely conclusion of negotiations on a draft comprehensive international convention for the elimination of terrorism.

The Bahamas condemns in the strongest possible terms the violence that resulted in the deaths of Ambassador Christopher Stevens and three other United States diplomats a few weeks ago. We in the international community must commit wholeheartedly and sincerely to creating a culture of peace throughout the world, underpinned by tolerance and understanding, that precludes such outrageous occurrences and their causes.

The level of armed violence and crime plaguing our society — due in large part to the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and trafficking in narcotics, neither of which our country manufactures or supplies — is increasing and cannot be allowed to continue if we are to save successive generations from a life steeped in violence and lawlessness. It has been more than a decade since the adoption in 2001 of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. Yet there has been no abatement in the level and intensity of armed violence impacting our country.

The Bahamas welcomes the recent convening and successful outcome of the United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. The Government reiterates its unwavering commitment to the full implementation of the Programme of Action. The lives of too many of our young people are being destroyed by the use of illicit weapons in our country. Now is the time to act.

Creating a safe Bahamas is a top priority for the Government. We are committed to the creation of a national intelligence agency and a national firearms control strategy, including the establishment of a firearms department and database, as well as to the enhancement of the operations of the country's Defence Force so that it can more effectively control the porous borders of the Bahamas. I would like to take the opportunity to thank the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs and the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean for their support and provision of equipment and capacity-building assistance in the area of firearms destruction and stockpile management. The Bahamas was pleased to conclude an agreement with the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs last April and to have participated in a number of regional training programmes and workshops sponsored by the Regional Centre on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and the strengthening of border controls.

The Bahamas joins other delegations in expressing our profound disappointment at the outcome of the United Nations Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty held in July and the failure of Member States to agree on a text despite six long years of protracted negotiations. The Bahamas supports the views articulated by the delegation of Trinidad and Tobago on behalf of the Caribbean Community during the month-long Conference. What we say to thousands of innocent victims is that their voices must be heard. But what do

we say to them and their families, who are suffering as a result of the irresponsible and unregulated international transfer of conventional arms? Commitment and a reassessment of human life and dignity versus profit are critical if we are to prevail in our fight against the scourge of armed violence and terror plaguing our societies. We look forward to a successful outcome in the next round of negotiations.

The Bahamas solemnly reaffirms its commitment to the three pillars of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. Advancements continue nationally in important areas pertaining to the protection of our biodiversity and development of policies to promote renewable energy. Some argue that finding out how to provide reliable and affordable energy may be the single largest factor affecting the future development of the Bahamas. The issue of energy is so important that the Prime Minister has made it as a personal mission to seek to solve the issue. We know that we must do it sustainably.

The Bahamas has enacted legislation to foster the sustainable use and management of ecosystems through better land-use planning. Under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, we have initiated actions to preserve our fish stocks by introducing penalties for overfishing. We have also taken action to ban long-line fishing, to establish the Bahamas as a sanctuary for sharks and to establish and expand marine protected areas For the Bahamas, it is imperative that those sustainable development strategies be complemented with appropriate actions taken by the international community. In that connection, we view the historic outcome of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) as offering significant opportunities, particularly for small island developing States (SIDS). We are encouraged by the international community's call for continued and enhanced efforts to assist SIDS in implementing the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation. The Bahamas also welcomes plans to convene the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States and will participate actively in the upcoming General Assembly consultations to determine the modalities of the meeting with a view to ensuring a successful outcome.

The Bahamas is also encouraged greatly by the decision taken at Rio+20 to undertake work on universal, action-oriented, sustainable development goals. In that work we must take into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and must respect national policies and priorities The Bahamas hopes to work in the context of the open-ended working group for the development of the sustainable development goals as well as in the intergovernmental committee on financing, agreed at Rio+20, to ensure that our special concerns are fully addressed.

In that connection, the Bahamas looks forward to the recommendations of the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on global post-2015 development planning and commends the level of female participation therein. The convening of the Panel offers a major opportunity to learn from the mistakes of the past and build a vision for global development beyond mere crisis management. The Panel must be seen to operate with open transparency. It should also incorporate the views of geographical and economic anomalies such as those of the Caribbean subregion, and be innovative and forward-looking.

The Bahamas welcomes the acknowledgement at Rio of the need to address the adverse impacts of climate change.

The Bahamas believes that the United Nations has a central role to play in global economic governance. The Bahamas welcomes the efforts of the Group of 20 (G-20), particularly Mexico in the role as current Chair, in helping to translate G-20 deliberations into effective actions on a global scale through broad consultation among Member States and with the United Nations itself to find solutions to many of the major challenges of our times, most particularly with respect to strengthening the international financial system.

The Bahamas also envisions a greater role for the United Nations in the area of international cooperation in tax matters. The Bahamas, along with the wider Group of 77 and China, continues to call for the conversion of the United Nations Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters into an intergovernmental subsidiary body of the Economic and Social Council, in keeping with the Doha mandate. We also continue to deplore the use by some States of their domestic laws for extraterritorial effect in such areas as human trafficking, financial services and drug smuggling. We continue to believe that those laws with extraterritorial effect are misplaced and put an unfair burden upon small States and that they may be interpreted as a departure from the international norms

of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States.

In order to reverse current economic trends, one of the core imperatives of the Government of the Bahamas is the strengthening of the domestic economy and the attendant creation of jobs, the broadening of Bahamian ownership in the economy and the attainment of a higher standard of living. Creating job opportunities and reversing the unacceptable unemployment situation in the country, which currently is at a high rate, have been identified at the highest political level as the most critical near-term priorities for the Government, especially in relation to young Bahamians. I wish to speak especially on their behalf today. The young Bahamian sector of our country has been most severely affected by the unemployment problem, and the rate of unemployment is unacceptable and cannot continue. We are committed to solving youth unemployment.

The Bahamas underscores the need for enhanced policy dialogue and international cooperation on the question of building green economies, which will indeed require new investments, skills formation, technology development and transfer and capacity-building.

The gross national income of the Bahamas is significantly affected by a small population of wealthy expatriates whose high incomes skew the measure away from the true economic realities. The construct of per capita gross national income, therefore, takes on a unique interpretation in the context of developing countries like the Bahamas and, I would daresay, the Caribbean subregion. The Bahamas continues to be deserving of considerations that will not deny us the right to develop sustainably, supported by financial, human and technological resources. Gross national income per capita should not be used as a pretext to restrict our access to financial assistance.

The General Assembly is set to consider, during this sixty-seventh session, the scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations regular budget and peacekeeping operations for the period 2013-2015. The Bahamas takes this opportunity to reiterate its long-standing position that per capita gross national income, for the reasons given, should not be accorded overriding weight in determining capacity to pay.

A representative, transparent, responsive, accountable, democratic and inclusive Security Council, predicated on an increased membership in both the permanent and non-permanent categories, as well as on modification of its working methods, is overdue. My delegation sincerely hopes that the next round of negotiations on Security Council reform during this session will result in tangible progress aimed at making the Council all that it can and should be.

Our desire for the realization of unfulfilled potential also extends to our regional partner, the Republic of Haiti. The Bahamas has been unremitting and consistent in its support for the people of Haiti and their aspirations for peace, security and development. The Bahamas commends the important role of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti in providing security in Haiti and in laying the foundation for its long-term recovery and stability. Pledges made toward Haiti's recovery and reconstruction must be honoured and fulfilled so that the required work can be undertaken and completed.

The Bahamas welcomes increased dialogue on improving international cooperation with respect to international migration and development. Illegal migration from Haiti is a vexing issue for our country. We agree that proper cooperation can certainly help to ensure that migration occurs through safe and regulated channels and to leverage the contributions that migrants can make to the development of our country. The Bahamas will continue to participate constructively in the process leading to the second High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, to be held by the General Assembly in 2013, with a view to addressing those and other related issues so crucial to our development.

Given the events over the past year in the Bahamas with regard to illegal migration, some of which have been tragic, as well as poaching in our seas by illegal persons from south of the country, the Bahamas will be taking stronger measures over the next year to put a stop to those illegal activities. We appeal to all nations in the region to prevail upon their citizens to cease and desist from those unlawful activities. We intend to work both bilaterally and with the broader international community to stop these assaults on our national and economic security.

The Bahamas has made significant strides in the areas of maternal and child health and HIV/AIDS in this, the fiftieth year since women obtained the right to vote in the Bahamas. We are committed to the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment

of women, as was affirmed by the Minister for Social Services during the consideration of the report on Bahamas by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women at its fifty-second session, held in July. The Bahamas, nevertheless, remains concerned about the increasing incidences of non-communicable diseases among the population, in particular women, who are disproportionately affected by such preventable diseases.

We can draw much strength, wisdom and inspiration from the remarkable successes of our nations' athletes nationally and subregionally at this year's Olympics. On behalf of my delegation, I would like to pay tribute to the youth of the world for their stellar displays of camaraderie and talent at the recent Olympics. In this forum, I wish to salute in particular the gold medal athletes of the Bahamas, namely, Demetrius Pinder, Michael Mathieu, Chris Brown and Ramon Miller. Indeed, the performances of the athletes from the entire Caribbean Community region are noteworthy, particularly those of our sister countries Grenada, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago. Those examples can be seen as contributing as much to peace and development in our world as our deliberations and initiatives at this session, hence, our warmest congratulations to them all.

My delegation also wishes to record in this forum the passing of my late friend and brother, the late Paul L. Adderley, who was the longest-serving Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Bahamas. His tenure included the most critical foreign policy challenges of an independent Bahamas to date. Sadly, he died on 19 September. He believed in this world body and its tenets and exemplified how it can assist small States. It is therefore only fitting that we mark and record his passing.

The Bahamas continues to believe that mankind can aspire to and achieve a higher inner strength that not can only cause us to excel even beyond our dreams, but also can lift all around us, even nations and the entire world. May each one of us therefore reach for that inner strength, change our world and transform an agenda of problems into covenants of partnerships. It remains as true as always that we need the United Nations.

The Acting President: I call on Her Excellency Ms. Aurelia Frick, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Principality of Liechtenstein.

Ms. Frick (Liechtenstein): We are convening in this Assembly at a time when we are witnessing a worrisome phenomenon, namely, senseless violence spreading through an entire region as a result of a senseless offence to religious feelings. More than any other organization, the United Nations stands for the ideals of tolerance, understanding and mutual respect. A strong message should therefore emerge from this debate. The hateful slander of people on the basis of their culture or religion is unacceptable. It is an abuse of the right to freedom of expression. However, we must emphasize just as clearly that violence cannot be justified by insults, however understandable the outrage may be. Such ongoing events also tell us that we must reach many more people in our effort to promote the values of the United Nations around the globe.

When we last met, a year ago, we heard many calls from this rostrum to bring an end to the crisis in Syria. Since then, the violence has turned into a civil war that puts the United Nations to shame. We have seen open division in the Security Council and little interest by the parties to the conflict in a United Nations-led mediation. Instead, the situation on the ground has further escalated. The entire region is now threatened with instability. The blatant disregard for the lives and rights of civilians, of women and children in particular, is simply shocking.

It is a crisis with profound and lasting effects for the three main pillars of the United Nations: peace and security, development, and human rights. It is therefore also an existential challenge for this Organization. The United Nations is only as effective as its political organs allow it to be. The crisis must therefore make us think in general terms about the lessons we should learn.

The situation in Syria is clearly of burning concern to the membership as a whole as a human security crisis and a threat to international peace and security. At the same time, the Security Council is unable to carry out its tasks under the Charter because of disagreement among its permanent members. It is therefore essential that the General Assembly step in and play a more active role, as it has done on some occasions. That is all the more important as we are confronted by the failure to fulfil the responsibility to protect a civilian population — a principle adopted in this Hall at the highest political level.

The stalemate in the Council demonstrates that we must look at the way in which the veto power is and can

be used. In that respect, there must be accountability vis-à-vis the membership of the Organization as a whole. After all, the Council carries out its work on behalf of us all. We call upon the permanent members to acknowledge that the United Nations Charter does not grant them the right to the veto without any strings attached. We ask them to acknowledge that the Council must at all times act in accordance with the purposes and principles of the United Nations. We therefore request that they pledge not to use the veto to block Council action aimed at preventing or ending genocide, crimes against humanity or war crimes.

Clearly, the main priority is to end the suffering of the Syrian people and to bring about a political solution that guarantees human security and stability for the region. However, we also have an obligation to ensure that there is no impunity for the worst crimes under international law and that those who have the greatest responsibility do not get away with murder.

The evidence before us is alarming. The independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, established by the Human Rights Council, came to clear conclusions. The primary responsibility to ensure accountability falls, of course, on the Syrian judiciary. But we can be under no illusions as to whether it will deliver justice to the victims and due process to all accused. We therefore join Switzerland in the call to the Council to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court (ICC) (see A/67/PV.7). But we also ask the Council to fully support such a referral in order to ensure cooperation and not to put up any obstacles to the appropriate financing of the Court's work. Without those two prerequisites, referrals are a mixed blessing and problematic for the ICC.

This year, we also commemorate the tenth anniversary of the International Criminal Court. We are looking at the history of an astonishing success. Who would have thought that the Court's membership would near two thirds of the membership of the United Nations in such a short time? Who would have predicted that the Security Council would make referrals to the ICC on two occasions — once even by unanimous vote? And who would have expected the Court to emerge from political controversy as a stronger institution?

Those are remarkable achievements that we can be proud of. Nevertheless, the next decade is also fraught with challenges. We have been strongly united in setting up the Court and getting it under way. Now that it is fully operational, we must more than ever support it politically. I therefore launched a ministerial-level initiative to support the ICC earlier this week. I was very encouraged by the strong response to my call for coordinated action when needed.

In adopting the Rome Statute, we have not just set up an international tribunal located in The Hague. We have also created a global system to fight impunity, which assigns a strong role to States. It also offers the Security Council an important role, if it chooses to play it. Political support is particularly required where investigations are based on referrals from the Security Council. The obligation for the State in question to cooperate is based entirely on the Security Council's authority, not on the Rome Statute. The Council must therefore play a key role in ensuring that such cooperation is forthcoming. We as States are also responsible for ensuring that indicted individuals are arrested and transferred to the Court. Clearly, we must do better in that regard.

We are also being given a historic opportunity both for the Court and for the United Nations: for the first time since the end of the Second World War, we can enable an international tribunal to prosecute the crime of aggression.

The prohibition of the illegal use of force is at the core of the Charter of the United Nations, and aggression has been considered a crime under international law for decades. But the consensual adoption of the Kampala amendments to the Rome Statute allows us to put that principle into practice. Leaders that consider resorting to the illegal use of force will be put on notice, once 30 States parties have ratified the amendments and once we have activated them in 2017. I am proud of the fact that Liechtenstein, following its presidency of the Review Conference, was the first State to ratify the amendments, on 8 May this year. We chose the date as a tribute to the commemoration of the end of the Second World War in Europe. We have also launched an initiative to support the ratification process that is under way.

I would therefore encourage all current and future parties to the Rome Statute to ratify the Kampala amendments as soon as possible. Together we can take this big step forward in the history of international law.

Criminalizing the illegal use of force between States would be a very significant step forward in the promotion of the rule of law at the international level.

The rule of law is rightfully moving to the centre of our attention. We have illustrated this fact by holding a high-level meeting on this topic earlier this week. The rule of law permeates many of the activities we pursue here at the United Nations. Indeed, there can be no lasting security, no sustainable development and no effective protection of human rights without the rule of law. We therefore look forward to a strong rule-of-law dimension in the sustainable development goals resulting from the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development.

The Conference resulted in a number of important agreements. It also illustrated the value of inclusive and transparent multilateralism, especially when compared with other, more exclusive decision-making processes. This serves as a reminder of the need to reconcile seemingly competing interests in international decision-making: transparency and inclusiveness on the one side, and efficiency and effectiveness on the other.

Mr. Kanda (Ghana), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Multilateral decision-making is efficient when there is sufficient political will. It is effective when it has the legitimacy necessary to ensure full implementation. We must revert to considering the universality and openness of the General Assembly as key assets, not as a weakness. The Assembly must reaffirm its unique and central role in global governance, including in the economic dimension. I welcome the strong commitment of President Jeremić, expressed at the beginning of this session, to work for genuine multilateralism and, to that end, to reach a new level of engagement. I assure him of our full support in this endeavour.

There must be accountability for decisions of global impact before the Assembly or before other relevant and universally accessible bodies. To achieve that aim, we will build on the progress made in recent years in the framework of the Global Governance Group. The Group has become a trusted bridge-builder in these matters. We hope that this issue will become one of the highlights of Mr. Jeremić's presidency.

Let me conclude with some remarks about an issue that is particularly dear to my heart. I am convinced that the inclusion of the whole population, men and women alike, is essential to the stability and peaceful and prosperous development of nations. Since becoming Foreign Minister, I have tried to make use of the relevant international platforms to promote the advancement of women. I also hope to bring Liechtenstein's expertise and passion for women's issues to the Commission on the Status of Women during the term 2015-2019.

I am grateful to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his leadership in this area. UN-Women, headed so charismatically by Michelle Bachelet, has given a much-needed additional boost to our efforts. If we continue on our path, then the United Nations can be the decisive driving force for gender equality worldwide. Until then, we can and must do much more, in particular in the area of women, peace and security. Stronger protection of women, both legal and otherwise, in situations where they are particularly prone to becoming victims is a key component. The United Nations, with its very strong field presence all over the world, can make a unique contribution to that end. But most importantly, the United Nations must lead by example when it comes to gender equality and the advancement of women. We must make the best use of their talents, skills and experiences as peacemakers, as agents for sustainable development and as advocates for human rights and the rule of law. As is well known, the future is female.

Only when women are fully included will we, the United Nations, be successful in pursuing our goals.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Luis Almagro, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay.

Mr. Almagro (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay, I would like to congratulate my friend Ambassador Vuk Jeremić on his election to preside over the work of the General Assembly during its sixty-seventh session. His experience, competence and reliability will be crucial in ensuring that the most representative body of the United Nations effectively fulfils its duties. We assure him of the full support of Uruguay.

The focus of the General Assembly this year on the promotion of the rule of law at national and international levels is extremely relevant, and I take this opportunity to welcome the declaration adopted by the General Assembly on Monday on that matter (resolution 67/1). Respect for and promotion of the rule of law at the national and international levels are two sides of the same coin, which has the well-being of the individual as its raison d'être. It means also that neither individuals nor States are above the law, but are subject to it.

Uruguay considers rule of law a constitutive element of the social contract that sustains its democratic system and that stands out as a pillar of its foreign policy. It is important to stress that this was not motivated by foreign influence, nor did it come through the adoption of an abstract political model from outside. Rather, it was the result of a profound internal process of building and organizing the free coexistence of our people.

The principle of juridical equality of States, like equality among individual people, is one of the fundamental principles of our Organization, guaranteeing to all the same right to participate in the responsibilities of the international community, independent of the power possessed by each nation. It is precisely in respect of this principle that our country rejects any coercive unilateral or extraterritorial measure that contravenes the rules of international law and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. The clearest contemporary example of such a measure is the embargo unfairly set against the Republic of Cuba.

The principle of the self-determination of peoples — understood as a collective right that must be observed in a manner analogous to respect for freedom of the individual at the domestic level — is also an essential pillar of the rule of law. That freedom, which includes freedom of expression and other fundamental freedoms, is closely related to the effective operation of democratic institutions.

In that respect, and without prejudice to reaffirming that any attempt at the partial or total disruption of the national unity or territorial integrity of a country is incompatible with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, Uruguay has always defended the right to self-determination of peoples as a key principle for the international coexistence of States. It reiterates its desire for a peaceful, just, sustainable and mutually accepted solution of the question of Western Sahara, based on international law and resolutions of the General Assembly and Security Council and respectful of the human rights and the will of the Saharan people.

An independent judicial system, to which all persons have access on the basis of the principle of equality before the law, is necessary for the genuine rule of law. Projecting this concept of the State and of the law beyond our borders is a vocation for peace and the peaceful settlement of disputes, of which my country was an early promoter. My country showed its firm commitment to those values and principles already at the Hague Conference of 1907, where it tried to introduce compulsory international arbitration, and also in 1921, when it became the first country to legally accept the compulsory jurisdiction of the Permanent Court of International Justice, under only the condition of reciprocity.

The strenuous efforts of the international community to build a fair system and to achieve greater balance among countries and greater well-being for their societies have not yet achieved the necessary ethical and policy solutions.

Recently we have seen what appears to be an era of change in some regions of the world. Peoples are seeking their freedom with the means they have at hand, with a legitimate desire to achieve democracy and greater well-being. Political actions of peoples seeking new alternatives of power have come up against those who are better organized politically and who thus will prevail, as they have always prevailed. Those who have now assumed power must be aware of their responsibilities towards those peoples.

Eradicating tyranny, consolidating peace and making social benefits available to everyone are enormous challenges. The task is to build real democracies, and to build them with all of the contradictions, differences and difficulties that exist within a society.

Even in our region we have received threats with a major ideological component. The attempted coup d'état in Ecuador and the breakdown of the democratic order in Paraguay have shown that Governments of change have been affected in the development of their policies. The rule of law and democracy are not acquired values; rather, they must be defended each day as precious goods.

Recent events such as what happened in Paraguay demonstrate that the rule of law is still threatened and that despite progress in terms of democratic institutions in all our nations, threats to the full exercise of fundamental rights and democratic values persist. That represents a great challenge to our aspiration to strengthen the integration and development of our countries, making the defence of the rule of law and the democratic order a necessary and unavoidable condition.

Despite the great changes that have afflicted humanity, the international system continues to work

hard, yet it does not resolve the problems, or resolves them unfairly. It has been unable to create equal financial or commercial opportunities. Even today, it is not a priority to invest in countries' human resources according to their specific needs. The political system has acted to control or decide political destinies, rather than to ensure the security or well-being of the people. Those who suffered before are suffering now. Powerful countries still threaten or intervene in other countries.

We have written about values and principles and have incorporated them in our constitutions. We have preached in many ways about what is good for everyone. But we have not succeeded in meeting the basic needs of billions of poor people, nor have we guaranteed them programmes for health, education, housing or employment.

The basis of social justice has not changed. It is peace, it is freedom, because without that we cannot be actively aware of noble causes that require that one not be dominated or oppressed — and without that, there is nothing. It is dignified housing that protects a family, work with dignity at a fair wage, the right to education and the responsibility of each individual. It is the health care that can save the 7 million children under 5 years of age who die each year around the world and that cares for the elderly, for women and for the destitute.

What is truly revolutionary is to change the conditions of life for those who cannot fully enjoy their rights, because our political ideal must be, essentially, the human dimension. The solution requires that the system provide each person the greatest guarantees of his political rights and that it be fair with regard to the obligations and responsibilities in that respect.

The greatest freedom implies the greatest responsibility. Each person, as both an individual and part of the community, must receive, possess and enjoy the rights that are fundamental to ensuring the well-being of all as a way to transform solutions into reality. The struggle for transformation determines the struggle of each person to find a solution for his problems. Resolving the issues inherent in poverty, lack of freedom or impediments to the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights requires concrete, urgent and immediate action.

Almost 200 years ago, someone declared that the most unfortunate would be the most privileged. His thinking was truly revolutionary, but there was something in it even more revolutionary, because he took on the task of orchestrating and executing the changes that would provoke the redistribution of resources. He took his solutions to the most needy: widows with children, children, and poor blacks, zambos and creoles.

Development requires change. The present day has given us, as a fundamental condition of our projects, insoluble problems such as poverty, malnutrition, overcrowding, unemployment, child mortality and other socioeconomic scourges that still afflict most of humanity. Therefore, this system requires a change, and the only way to carry it out is to transform reality.

Our responsibilities as a community of nations cannot be avoided, as some of those problems occur as a natural result of the conditions and characteristics of relations among States. The international context tends to concentrate wealth, efficiency and competitiveness and has no mechanisms to redistribute the resources in a fair and efficient manner that would provide a roof to every homeless person, a plate of food to every hungry person or break the chains of the oppressed. The international system is based on the struggle of national interests for a more powerful position, and that means that the concentration of power becomes ever greater.

Everyone is aware that countries such as ours operate within highly competitive international markets, that we do not determine prices, that commodity prices fluctuate thus altering our national export matrix, and that we are exposed to successive financial crises. Continuing with this line of thought, it is essential to prioritize Uruguay's involvement in the international community, integrating international aspects of the country's issues in the areas of agriculture, industry, commercialization and financing, all with the purpose of eliminating poverty, achieving social justice and firmly establishing primary education. Among other things, this requires reducing or eliminating the distortions that pose obstacles to commercial exchange, particularly agriculture subsidies, internal supports and other protectionist measures that prevent international trade from becoming a factor that contributes to solving the financial crisis that is currently affecting the global economy.

Economic and social development requires the stability and predictability that the rule of law ensures. The United Nations has grasped that reality, and it is encouraging to see that strengthening the rule of law, and the institutions whose job it is to implement that

rule of law, is central to the tasks of the Organization's various peacekeeping, peacebuilding and special political missions, including the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, to which Uruguay is a principal contributor.

Our historical belief that a national society must be ruled by law means that we believe that the community of sovereign nations should regulate itself in conformity with international law. In that context, it is Uruguay's hope that the international community can take effective steps towards eliminating nuclear weapons and focus its efforts on eliminating this terrible threat still hanging over humankind. Similarly, we call for redoubled efforts to enable us finally to conclude a treaty regulating the arms trade, which has a serious impact on Latin American and Caribbean countries and other developing regions of the world.

Regarding the promotion and protection of human rights, Uruguay's coordination with the international system has reached a very high level. Our country is party to all legal instruments relating to human rights and international humanitarian law. It offers an open invitation to all universal and inter-American special procedures to visit the country and recognizes the binding jurisdiction of all monitoring committees for receiving individual complaints and communications. At the same time, Uruguay has expressed its preference for establishing international jurisdictional bodies and institutions. Our country's longtime goal in this area was realized at the regional level through the establishment in 1969 of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights under the San José de Costa Rica Pact.

Uruguay has been a member of the Human Rights Council since its creation in 2006 and is its President for the period 2011-2012. During our mandate, we have advocated for a new culture of dialogue, for the progressive and incremental utilization of special procedures and other instruments for action before resorting to coercive or confrontational measures, for a two-way cooperative model between States and the United Nations system, for greater regional coordination and for the importance of civil society's participation. We have promptly, clearly and constructively expressed our position on situations involving serious violations of human rights, ethnic cleansing, crimes against humanity and war crimes.

Uruguay has been a party to the Rome Statute since 2002 and has enacted a law that can be seen as a model of cooperation with the International Criminal Court.

Seven years ago, when the Assembly was considering the concept of the responsibility to protect, we committed to ending mass atrocities, giving priority to prevention and aiding States that so requested to comply fully with their responsibilities to protect their peoples from such scourges and to respond speedily and decisively in accordance with the provisions of the United Nations Charter.

We firmly condemn the serious violations of human rights that are taking place in Syria. The situation has deteriorated and the suffering of the civilian population has become intolerable. We support the work of the independent international commission of inquiry established by the Human Rights Council, which in its most recent report (A/HRC/21/50) states that there is reason to believe that Government forces are committing crimes against humanity. All violence in Syria must cease immediately; it is essential that we establish a process of dialogue aimed at reaching a peaceful solution. Uruguay supports the mediator role of the United Nations within a framework of a strict respect for international law and the principles of the Charter. The protection of civilians is a multifaceted task, of which the most sensitive and important aspect is protecting those facing imminent danger of physical violence.

Through its firm commitment to peacekeeping operations, Uruguay has played and will continue to play a proactive and constructive role both at Headquarters and on the ground. Nevertheless, we must make greater efforts and work for better coherence among all the actors involved in order to eliminate or minimize as far as possible the numbers of civilian victims of armed conflicts.

Human rights are universal, interdependent and indivisible. Ensuring that they are enforced, protected and promoted is possible only through a firmly established rule of law and well-functioning democratic institutions, democracy, good governance and a more effective multilateral system.

It is essential that the United Nations adapt to global challenges, guarantee its presence on the ground and respond to all the challenges faced by developing countries in accordance with their priorities and needs. It is thus imperative that development processes emphasize one of the greatest threats to the rule of law and democracy — poverty, particularly extreme poverty, which causes instability and insecurity. Our

country has given absolute priority to combating that scourge purposefully and head on. In the past year alone, Uruguay was able to reduce the percentage of people living in poverty from 18.6 to 13.7 per cent, and of those in extreme poverty from 1.1 to 0.5 per cent. Combating the adverse effects of climate change, a key challenge to achieving sustainable development, is also one of our priorities.

Now more than ever, we must revitalize our global alliance for development and increase international cooperation.

Finally, if the strength and sustainability of the rule of law at the national level depend on the active participation of citizens in defending the standards that ensure every society's continued coexistence and development, at the international level it requires full compliance with the principles of international law and the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and strong commitment to the causes of peace, the peaceful settlement of disputes and multilateralism. That is the main goal that Uruguay has pursued during the process of building the United Nations, both as a founding Member and through its participation in the activities of the General Assembly. It is our ambition to continue those efforts from within the Security Council should our country be elected, as we hope, to that body as a non-permanent member for the period 2016-2017.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Apisai Ielemia, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Environment, Trade, Labour and Tourism of Tuvalu.

Mr. Ielemia (Tuvalu): It is my great honour and pleasure to participate in the general debate of the Assembly on behalf of the people and Government of Tuvalu. As Tuvalu will commemorate the thirty-fourth anniversary of its independence on Monday next week, 1 October, let me take this opportunity to acknowledge with profound appreciation the continued assistance and support given us by the United Nations, the international community and in particular our traditional development partners in our pursuit of our development goals.

The overarching theme, "Bringing about adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means", together with a myriad of core issues that have been chosen for the Assembly's sixty-seventh session, is fully supported by Tuvalu. In view of circumstances facing the world today, there is certainly an urgent and critical need for the United Nations and for each Member State in particular to address those issues, individually or collectively.

As a small and peace-loving nation, Tuvalu welcomes and fully supports the important services provided by the United Nations and other organizations in the maintenance of peace and security around the world, especially in conflict regions. We firmly believe that the use of force through military or violent action as a means for settling disputes and conflicts should be avoided at all costs. It is also important that countries involved in such disputes should be encouraged and supported in discussing the root causes of their differences among themselves in a non-confrontational manner.

We concur fully with the President's vision that we cannot be defeated by terrorists, extremists and the sponsors and supporters who back them. The world we want to give our future generations is not one of terrorism and fanaticism, or of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, maritime piracy, organized crime, drugs and narcotic smuggling, child labour and trafficking, slavery and religious intolerance. In the United Nations, we strive for international peace and security; that is the world we want to give to all future generations.

Faced with globalized agendas, the United Nations must cooperate and seek engagement with other organizations and their memberships for partnerships in development activities. The United Nations should also seek to ensure participatory planning in the design of any engagement so that we co-opt and work together with the existing diverse fabric of our societies, whose issues we are trying to address and assist with. The United Nations should also align its programmes and activities with those of the host country's needs and action frameworks, heeding the distinctiveness of our membership.

When Tuvalu became the 189th Member of the United Nations in September 2000, we were conscious of the complexity and breadth of the United Nations agenda in comparison with our relatively modest capacity. Yet there was one issue that we were confidently determined to bring to the fore. Does the United Nations hear the plea of small island developing States (SIDS) for fair treatment by the international community?

Today, 12 years later, we consider this lasting concern almost totally unanswered. That may sound

surprising to some representatives, as we all tend to be under the impression that much work, time and energy has been spent over the past two decades for the benefit of SIDS. Without going into detail on the state of the SIDS agenda, I would like to make three observations on the subject and outline Tuvalu's intentions in the same vein.

First, as much as we appreciate the work of various United Nations departments and programmes on SIDS, we observe that this work has been almost entirely focused on stating and indefinitely reiterating the challenges and problems SIDS are facing. We have seen nearly 20 General Assembly resolutions on SIDS adopted since the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, held in Barbados, and numerous reports of the Secretary-General on the subject. Two United Nations conferences on SIDS have been organized, and now new momentum is gathering towards a third conference in 2014.

Secondly, there is no part of the SIDS work in the United Nations that has ever generated international support measures specially reserved for SIDS. In other words, in 20 years the United Nations has not been able to hear and answer the pleas our island States have been making for special treatment. SIDS status and SIDS-specific treatment are truly what our small island States are in need of, just as the least developed countries (LDCs) need the special treatment extended to them by the international community.

Thirdly, we would like to reply to those, within and outside the United Nations, who have been arguing that the case for special treatment of SIDS is not and should not be on the United Nations agenda, because special treatment of SIDS would imply the existence of a SIDS category, and apparently, we are told, SIDS cannot be considered and dealt with as a special category. Therefore, SIDS are only an abstract notion deliberately kept undefined, because any clarity or debate on what they are and what precisely could be done for them would be too challenging or disturbing.

That seemingly accepted sense of SIDS work in the United Nations does not match Tuvalu's vision of what the United Nations ought to be doing in support of those countries. We believe that the time has come for us to spell it out; the third decade of United Nations work on SIDS should not be another round of lip service. That will require a number of needed special international measures for SIDS to be identified and, naturally also, that some order be put in the definition of SIDS, as a necessary condition for making SIDS a genuine, internationally accepted special category of countries.

Tuvalu greatly appreciates the decision taken by the Economic and Social Council to note the recommendation of the Committee for Development Policy to graduate Tuvalu from the least developed country category and to consider that issue at its next substantive session in 2013. That will allow the Council the opportunity for full consideration of the particular challenges Tuvalu faces. In that regard, despite the fact that Tuvalu has met two of the three criteria for graduation from LDC status, there is an urgent need for the United Nations to revisit such criteria in order to reflect and capture the real situation of the economies of the countries eligible for graduation.

We believe that treating the case of Tuvalu the same way one deals with other countries is a denial of what decades of United Nations advocacy have set in place. It would be something akin to the principle of equal treatment, namely, the principle of special treatment, which is precisely the foundation of the very existence of LDC status. If the geographical limitations and extreme vulnerabilities of Tuvalu do not justify special consideration, what is the purpose of special and differentiated treatment, the cornerstone of international cooperation? Obviously, countries are acutely uneven and unequal, and treating them on the basis of a one-size-fits-all paradigm would simply be wrong. Tuvalu looks forward to the continued understanding and support of members of the Economic and Social Council on the question of its graduation from the LDC category.

Tuvalu also accords the highest priority to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Tuvalu has passionately pursued those Goals, and we sincerely thank the donor community for its invaluable support, be it in-kind or financial. As we progress to the end of the MDGs in 2015, we continue to seek such partnerships so as to ensure that the MDGs are achieved fully and effectively as we anticipate the transition to the sustainable development goals.

We are also fully committed to the strategic implementation of the essential dictates of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, the Mauritius Strategy for its further implementation, and the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed

Countries for the Decade 2011-2020, and seek the cooperation of development partners to provide, in a timely and predictable manner, financial and technical support to ensure their successful implementation.

We have repeatedly called on developed and emerging countries and their partners to take a leadership role in reducing their greenhouse-gas emissions and to help small and poor countries like Tuvalu in their mitigation and adaptation activities. Tuvalu's security and nationhood are continuously being threatened by the adverse impact of climate change, especially by sea-level rise. Much has been said and documented on the root causes of climate change and its negative consequences for many countries, not just the most vulnerable small island States like Tuvalu. Yet the ongoing global pleas to address such consequences have so far fallen on ignorant, if not deaf, ears.

Our smallness and lack of natural endowments, as well as being only four metres above sea level, leave us extremely vulnerable to natural shocks, particularly to the effects of climate change and sea-level rise. As is well known, sea-level rise and flooding threaten Tuvalu's limited agricultural production, undermine food security, and increase our vulnerability to supply disruptions. We therefore support advances and urge perseverance with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol as the primary international, intergovernmental forum for negotiating the global response to climate change in order to give substance to international agreements.

As a sea-locked country, we in the Pacific have offered the resources of our vast oceans to be utilized by developed countries. We ask the partner countries to be more responsible and to reward us as guardians with the appropriate compensations that are conducive to our development needs, as well as environmentally recompensing. Domestically, Tuvalu is pursuing energy efficiencies, development strategies and goals that are both green or blue and sustainable. We have challenged ourselves to be 100 per cent renewable in 2020 in our energy sector. We could miss the mark, but we will not be comforted by remaining inactive, be it in our vision or in our action. We have asked developed countries to reduce carbon emissions; we will do the same at home, regardless of scale contrasts.

With the advent of technology, Tuvalu seeks the donors' assistance in realizing their pledges to establish early-warning systems pertaining to tsunamis or tropical cyclones in order to mitigate any risk and subsequent cost to Tuvalu. Tuvalu wishes also to offer its established trust fund protocols to the United Nations and development partners' funding mechanisms for climate change adaptation as innovative financing instruments and architecture for channelling such resources to Tuvalu. Our trust funds are governed by international agreements and renowned worldwide as transparent and accountable mechanisms with high international standards of accounting and governance.

Many suggestions for enhancing the role of the United Nations have been documented. We also continue to hear from the experts and technical advisers of the development of alternative energy drives and technologies, be they solar, wind or wave. In our region, and I believe in many other remote areas, we ask how we can get those new technologies to be readily available and price-effective to the membership of the United Nations, especially LDCs and SIDS. We therefore urge the United Nations and the Secretariat to act as facilitators of such developments and to expedite technology transfers, where appropriate, to bring our many words and resolutions to fruition.

Our collective and global efforts to have peace and security as a prerequisite for the stability needed for global economic growth, sustainable development and social progress will be meaningless if the United Nations continues not to recognize and acknowledge Taiwan's significant contribution and efforts towards the East China Sea peace initiative for regional stability and peace. Furthermore, Taiwan's continued contribution to the international community as one of the committed development partners and responsible stakeholders in achieving the Millennium Development Goals should be recognized and accepted by the United Nations system as a valuable contribution to our collective efforts. In that regard, Tuvalu calls upon the United Nations subsidiary bodies, especially the International Civil Aviation Organization and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to recognize and allow Taiwan to participate in and contribute meaningfully to their meetings and activities without reservations.

Incidentally, any legitimate claim for new nationhood or independence, be it in the Pacific region or the world over, should be supported, as colonialism in any form is contradictory to the United Nations Charter, just as any form of discrimination by race, gender or belief is not accepted in a civilized, modern and free world.

I conclude by asking that the United Nations continue to cooperate in an unprecedented way. The United Nations must work together more enterprisingly and reform our strategies to conform to new developments, contemporary innovations and issues. Holding and hosting meeting after meeting is a good engagement strategy and directs our activities. However, delaying the implementation of resolutions is detrimental, as resolution after resolution is shelved or deferred until they are redundant. The United Nations Charter, I believe, is premised on timely actions and achievements to gauge whether we are effective and sustainable or merely validating our inactivity.

I wish the President, the Secretary-General and all our membership every success in the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. K. Shanmugam, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Singapore.

Mr. Shanmugam (Singapore): I extend my congratulations to Mr. Vuk Jeremić on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. I wish him every success in the year ahead.

The global economic situation remains uncertain. Europe is in recession and growth in other places is weakening. There is increasing concern that this combination of weak consumer demand in developing countries and a continuing crisis in the eurozone may lead to a global recession. An even greater danger, especially for small States like Singapore that depend on global trade, is the risk of increased protectionism.

Populist pressures in countries affected by austerity and economic crisis can cause further instability as politicians become unwilling or unable to deal with long-term, structural economic problems. While emerging economies focus on maintaining economic growth, developed economies are preoccupied with both immediate and structural socioeconomic problems. Understandably, there is less focus on strategic regional and international issues. However, serious, long-term challenges remain. Rising income disparities, climate change issues and worries about food security are not being adequately addressed at the global level.

Amid that uncertainty, no State or group of States currently has the power to definitively set the international agenda. Decision-making and governance on global issues have and will continue to become increasingly complicated. The multiplicity of interests makes finding consensus in international forums that much more difficult. Frustration over the inability of existing multilateral institutions to deal with those global challenges is growing, and that has given rise to a greater tendency for countries to turn to smaller and more exclusive groupings outside of the United Nations framework for solutions.

The Group of 20 (G-20) is one such example. Without the G-20, the 2008 economic crisis may have well led to a global depression. However, the G-20 is an exclusive grouping; it leaves out the vast majority of the United Nations membership, particularly small States. It is a self-selected group, but one that is here to stay in the foreseeable future. The Global Governance Group was therefore established by like minded-countries, including Singapore, to strengthen the engagement between the G-20 and the general membership of the United Nations. Even as we work with the G-20, we should look for ways to strengthen and reform existing multilateral institutions, including the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization. That will help us to achieve greater efficiency, rather than continuing to invent more smaller groupings.

Many of us often fault the United Nations, including the Security Council, for its inability to act to resolve ongoing conflicts. However, as frustrations mount, let us not forget that the United Nations and its organs, including the Security Council, can do only what its Members choose to do, so we are responsible for the current state of affairs. The United Nations is an organization of sovereign nation States. It has no more authority than what its Members give it. Any failure of the Security Council and the United Nations in maintaining peace and security represents a failure of the Member States themselves.

We should therefore support ongoing and new efforts aimed at strengthening the United Nations, instead of denigrating it. The United Nations is unique in its ability to come up with global solutions because of its universal membership, legitimacy, experience and presence on the ground. No other organization is as well equipped to do so. A significant expansion of the United Nations mediation capabilities, good offices and peacekeeping efforts has made it central to international crisis prevention and the mediation and settlement of disputes. We should continue to support the strengthening of those aspects.

The five permanent members of the Security Council, with their veto powers, have the primary responsibility to make the Council more effective. That is why Singapore has consistently called for improvement in the Security Council's working methods. The Security Council is not a rubber stamp for the interests of its individual members. Its power, if not visibly and openly wielded for the greater good and to discharge its mandate in all instances, will eventually undermine its legitimacy and leadership role in the international community. That is in no one's interest.

Singapore believes that the long-term goal of the United Nations should be to provide an effective system of international law and resilient mechanisms for the peaceful settlement of disputes. That will provide a platform for States under threat to bring their problems before those mechanisms with confidence, rather than trying to resolve them by force.

The President has selected an important theme for the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly: bringing about adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means. In a fast-changing environment, where the global governance structure is fragmented and coordination is difficult, the parameters of dialogue among States become crucial.

In that dialogue among States, respect for the rule of law by all parties is essential. If that were not the case, small States would lose their independence and autonomy, and even the larger and stronger States could never feel entirely secure. A stable international system is critical to our collective security. Small States like Singapore are vulnerable even at the best of times, and these are not the best of times. It is therefore particularly important for small States to be in an international environment where international law and institutions based on law can flourish. We need a predictable and stable, rules-based international system in order for all of us to survive.

Singapore firmly believes in the importance of safeguarding the international rule of law. We have participated actively in various multilateral negotiations, used international dispute mechanisms, such as the International Court of Justice and the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, to resolve disputes we have had with other countries. Our view is that disputes, including those over territorial sovereignty, can and should be resolved peacefully, in accordance with international law.

As major beneficiaries of a stable international system, it is incumbent upon small States to not only support the international rule of law, but to also speak up against its violation. This year, the 105-member Forum of Small States will commemorate its twentieth anniversary with a high-level conference on small States on 1 October. The conference will discuss the role of small States in international relations, including our commitment to the rule of law and the peaceful settlement of disputes. We invite all Member States to attend the conference. We hope that the conference will be a platform for small States to share our experiences and remind the international community that small States, too, have contributions to make to the maintenance of an international system that benefits all nations of any size.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, Minister for Foreign Affairs and African Integration of the Republic of Chad.

Mr. Mahamat (Chad) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, allow me on behalf of the Chadian delevation to wholeheartedly thank the President for selecting the theme for the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly, "Bringing about adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means". That subject is at the very heart of the principles that underlie the existence of our Organization, and reflects the global concerns of our day.

Indeed, the world is in an period of unprecedented tension, perhaps even more serious than that following the Cold War. From Afghanistan to Mali; from Pakistan to Somalia; from Libya to Syria; and from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to that of the Sudan and South Sudan, most of the crises that have recently shaken and continue to shake our planet, while undoubtedly rooted in political and social claims, also have considerable religious and cultural undertones that are often difficult to address.

Africa is the crucible of all the scourges affecting the world. The war and attacks in Somalia, the situation in Mali, the crises in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and between the two Sudans, violence in Libya and outbreaks in Côte d'Ivoire and the Central African Republic are situations which many attempts to resolve have proved ineffective. Based on the principle that without peace and security development is not possible, the international community, embodied in the United Nations, has the firm obligation to contribute

to establishing peace by making use of all the legal mechanisms at its disposal for settling conflict.

The Organization has been particularly active in recent years in different theatres of conflict, such as Afghanistan, Darfur, Côte d'Ivoire, Libya and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Since its inception, the United Nations has never been so involved in different hotbeds of tension around the world. We commend that presence because of its calming and legitimizing effect on populations and even on protagonists. However, we also need to ponder the form and effectiveness of that presence. The stalemate in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, despite the massive and costly deployments of the forces mandated by the United Nations, clearly reflect the inability of the international community to impose peace where it is necessary.

The crisis in Mali comes as a test and a challenge for the international community. Along with that crisis, obscurantist and violent religious fundamentalism, drug and human trafficking and irredentist claims have taken root in the very heart of Africa today. Can the world continue to stand by for much longer given that that gangrene, of which Mali is only the epicentre, threatens to spread throughout the entire Sahel?

Our delegation commends the determination of the international community seen at the high-level meeting on the Sahel that was organized on the initiative of the Secretary-General. We commend the commitments of France, the Economic Community of West African States and above all those of the primary party concerned, namely, Mali, to act to eradicate that gangrene. The United Nations, too, needs to expedite procedures and act quickly by adopting a resolution that would authorize the intervention of an international military force.

I would like to take advantage of my presence at this rostrum to warmly commend Mr. Omer Hassan A. Al-Bashir of the Sudan and Mr. Salva Kiir of South Sudan, who overcame their differences and reached a peace and security agreement, albeit partial. We sincerely hope that the agreement will quickly lead to a final understanding, which is so necessary to the progress of the countries and to the stability of the subregion.

It is my pleasure to inform the Assembly that within the framework of subregional initiatives with respect to peace and security in the Sahel, the member countries of the Community of Sahelo-Saharan States (CEN-SAD) have undertaken a reform of our organization, which will incorporate peace and security dimensions into its updated texts. The President of the Republic of Chad, Mr. Idriss Deby Itno, has invited his colleagues from member countries to a summit meeting in N'Djamena on 29 November to adopt new texts aimed at refocusing CEN-SAD's objectives on the specific concerns of the region.

The ability of extremist groups to cause harm across borders calls for a collective and appropriate response. Our community, CEN-SAD, which includes almost all of the countries of the Sahel and the Saraha, seems to be the appropriate structure in which to bring together all our response strategies.

Drawing on lessons from the difficulties experienced by the United Nations on the ground, Chad requested the departure in 2010 of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT). The Mission had been mandated to stabilize the region and protect Sudanese refugee camps in Darfur and those of internally displaced persons in eastern Chad. Despite a huge budget and considerable resources, that force did not prove to be an effective deterrent. It left the bulk of the work to the Détachement intégré de sécurité (DIS), a special national Chadian force made up 600 men and women. After MINURCAT's departure, Chad decided to entrust DIS with the protection of refugees and displaced persons and any humanitarian organizations that provided assistance. A joint support programme for DIS was signed in February 2011 in order to mobilize the necessary logistical financial support to enable it to operate. The overall budget was estimated to be $20 million, about 2 per cent of the budget allocated to MINURCAT, which, I would remind the Assembly, amounted to some $800 million per year. That support has not yet been forthcoming, and Chad has been bearing the cost of the unit alone, estimated at about $4 million per year. I would also remind the Assembly that the responsibility of providing security to refugees, displaced persons and humanitarian organizations living in that region cannot and should not be left to Chad alone. The international community has the obligation to consider that issue and address it. That is why Chad is reiterating the special appeal it launched from this rostrum last year, requesting our Organization to take heed.

Africa sorely needs international solidarity, not only to settle the conflicts and crises sweeping through

it, but also for its development. In both cases, the results have been disappointing. The Millennium Development Goals, official development assistance and debt relief, in sum all of the commitments made in that regard, have either not been met or have been met only halfway. We would remind the Assembly that poverty, unemployment and, at times, despair are the scourges that push young Africans to extremism and to seek better prospects elsewhere. Africa needs assistance on a large scale, not in small doses, in order to help those young people and give them new confidence in their continent. This would not absolve the African States from shouldering their primary responsibility to create the right conditions for progress and prosperity.

For its part, my country, Chad, under the leadership of President Idriss Deby Itno, is continuing the necessary political and economic reforms for its development and stability. We have just held the first municipal elections in our political history, and there were presidential and legislative elections in 2011. In addition, we are reviewing ways of establishing new arrangements for political dialogue with the democratic opposition, similar to those which enabled us to hold the latest elections in a calm and tranquil environment.

For that reason, we are patiently working to consolidate the rule of law and strengthen the values of tolerance and democracy within Chadian society. That is a long and arduous process in a country that has just been through three decades of violence and political instability. With stability restored and socioeconomic progress achieved, Chad would like to make its modest contribution to building a world of justice and peace. For that reason, my country is for the first time a candidate for a non-permanent seat in the Security Council during the elections of October 2013.

The efforts undertaken by my country have, however, been hampered by unexpected events: first, the crisis in Libya, which required us to strengthen security along the borders with that country, in addition to our efforts to secure our borders with the Sudan, the Central African Republic and the Lake Chad region that borders Nigeria and the Niger; secondly, the arrival of nearly 100,000 Chadians who had fled the war in Libya, the majority of whom were young people needing help with reintegration; and, thirdly, the current floods, caused by exceptionally heavy rains. The Government's appeal for help for the victims of the disaster has not yet received the expected response.

Despite all those constraints and the sacrifices undertaken by Chad, we have not been able to benefit from the debt relief that comes with reaching the completion point. We therefore call on our bilateral and multilateral partners to take into account our unique situation and support us as we move forward.

The theme of our session this year reminds us that all of the formulas that have been used to address the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have failed. As the crisis goes on and on, it is becoming accepted; yet, it is at the very root of the worst violence the world has seen in recent years. The community of nations cannot behave like an ostrich indefinitely, allowing a crisis as old as the United Nations itself to drag on interminably — a crisis which is a constant threat to peace and the regional and global balance. Here, too, old postures need to change and robust initiatives need to be taken to put an end to the conflict, which has gone on far too long.

The international realities of our time should also strengthen our determination to bring about the reform of the Security Council. The primary innovation should be to expand its membership, with the admission of Africa as a permanent member with the right of veto. The world has greatly changed. We therefore need to adapt our global governance to these developments.

In conclusion, the delegation of Chad, through me, would like to express how much we admire the newly elected President's steering of the work of the General Assembly. We also would like to pay tribute to the Secretary-General for his personal commitment in the quest for peace worldwide. We firmly hope that his efforts will be successful and bring about more justice and serenity for humankind.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Hamady Ould Hamady, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania.

Mr. Ould Hamady (Mauritania) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am pleased and honoured at the outset to express our heartfelt congratulations on the election of Mr. Vuk Jeremić as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. We have every confidence in his efforts and in everything that he will undertake in order to maintain the gains made in preserving international peace and security and to promote an international order that will ensure peace, prosperity and progress for all humankind. I am firmly convinced that the proficiency, political skills and spirit of responsibility that he demonstrated when he twice served as Minister

for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia will give him the ability to do so.

I would also like to underscore the continual efforts of Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, President of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session, and his determination to promote dialogue as an effective tool for cooperation and to formulate the best possible solutions to international issues.

We would like, too, to congratulate and thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his steadfast activities to preserve international peace and security and to promote the Millennium Development Goals, as well as to mobilize the international community to deal with climate change, which now has a negative impact on the future of humankind.

The sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly is taking place at a time when many regions of the world are facing particularly difficult political and economic conditions. Aware of the importance of the role and responsibility of our citizens in steering the destiny of the country, we in the Islamic Republic of Mauritania have been able to carry out a peaceful, smooth transition from a repressive totalitarian regime and the mismanagement of public wealth to democratic rule based on credible constitutional institutions, thereby restoring the rule of law.

We are also pleased to see that the peaceful settlement of national and international disputes is the theme selected for this session of the General Assembly, and we appreciate the results of the high-level dialogue on that important subject.

From that standpoint, my country has enacted a series of laws and reforms enshrining individual and collective political freedoms, guaranteeing the people as a whole the full exercise of those basic rights, subject to the rule of law, and ensuring the independence of the judiciary. In that context, the Islamic Republic of Mauritania has sought to fulfil all the obligations and commitments it undertook under the tripartite agreement with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, on the one hand, and the Government of the host State, the sister Republic of Senegal, on the other. The agreement concerned the organized return of Mauritanians who had been living in Senegal since the end of the 1980s. The operation was completed in perfect accord with all the parties involved and consisted of the organized return of 106 contingents, totalling 24,536 refugees, between 29 January 2008 and 25 March 2012.

Mr. Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, President of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, personally presided over an official ceremony on 25 March in the city of Rosso, which is the capital of the state of Traza. That was an opportunity for the High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. Antonio Guterres, to solemnly proclaim that the issue of the Mauritanian refugees in Senegal was finally closed. Along the same lines, the Government undertook to resolve the issue of the so-called humanitarian debt by paying those victims who were entitled to compensation and by settling the situation of members of the armed and security forces, Government workers and contract civil servants, whose rights were also restored.

There has been a genuine and transparent political dialogue between the parties of the President's majority and certain democratic opposition parties, which led to an agreement late last year. The agreement included the creation of a national independent electoral commission that is completely autonomous and that will fully oversee the upcoming elections, beginning with the legislative and municipal elections. In addition, there have been many important constitutional reforms, as called for by the democratic opposition.

Mauritania has worked to strengthen good governance by ensuring transparency in the management of public funds and by enhancing the independent judicial system, particularly by improving the conditions of judges and guaranteeing their independence. The economy has seen sustained growth, including the implementation of ambitious programmes aimed at improving the living conditions of the people, especially those with low incomes.

Since the accession to the presidency of Mr. Ould Abdel Aziz, the Islamic Republic of Mauritania has been reactivating its presence in regional and international organizations, first and foremost in the United Nations and its specialized agencies. We adhere fully to its noble ideals, and we comply with the resolutions, as a strategic choice for our foreign policy. In this regard, we reaffirm our support for reform of the United Nations system, particularly the Security Council.

We reiterate our desire to see the African continent receive a permanent seat on the Council, since it is the only continent that does not have permanent representation in the body that addresses international

peace and security. That is true despite the fact that one billion people inhabit the continent of Africa and two thirds of peacekeeping operations take place there. In addition, we call for a permanent seat on the Council for the Arab Group because of its demographic weight vis-à-vis the global population and its considerable economic potential, in particular in the area of energy.

My country provides effective support to intergovernmental efforts that have been taking place for a number of years to find a solution that enjoys the consensus of Member States on the reform of the United Nations in general, the working methods and mechanisms of its decision-making bodies, and above all, membership in the Security Council and the issue of defining its authority and codifying its working relationship with the General Assembly in order to ensure the effectiveness of our Organization in faithfully reflecting the will of the international community.

We note with great satisfaction the tireless efforts to achieve consensus during the sixty-seventh session, including with regard to the conclusions of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, which will undoubtedly contribute — if they are implemented, obviously — to limiting the major risks facing our planet, in particular the phenomena of global warming and climate change, which are now the clear concern and danger facing humankind.

We welcome the outcomes of the Second Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, which led to a consensus agreement on a programme of action to prevent the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

Despite the efforts made and results achieved during the Assembly's sixty-sixth and earlier sessions, including the Millennium Summit, despite the establishment of goals and the adoption of an agenda to achieve them, most developing countries, particularly the least developed, are falling short of achieving their objectives. This is due to a range of factors, including, for example, endemic unemployment, particularly among young people; the prevalence of extreme poverty among the most vulnerable segments of society; and the slowing of growth and stagnation of the global economy. Foreign direct investment is declining in Africa. The prices of basic goods on international markets are rising, which has a direct impact on purchasing power in many poor countries, where a large part of the population lives on less than $1 per day. Rates of net financial transfers to developing countries are falling, and revenue from tourism is falling acutely. Infant mortality is rising. The heavy debt burden seriously slows the economies of developing countries, especially least developed, and directly affects the already modest financial resources of the countries, thereby hampering their ability to meet their basic needs in terms of infrastructure and public services.

Against this worrying backdrop, we call on rich countries and donors to honour their commitment to contribute to the economies of developing countries, giving priority to least developed, so that they can have acceptable access to public services, thus ensuring peaceful civil order, security, stability and social cohesion in those countries, and thereby safeguard peace around the world.

At the initiative, and with the support, of President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, our Government has endeavoured to provide citizens decent living conditions and to help them in times of crises. In this connection, an emergency intervention plan, known as the 2012 Hope Plan, supported by some $170 million of State budgetary resources, was launched to deal with declining agricultural production and pastures declining owing to a lack of rain last year, as our country is greatly dependent on farming and livestock-raising. This ambitious plan is providing food and drinking water for both people and livestock, and at affordable prices with a view to mitigate the impact of the crisis, in particular for the poorest segments of the population. This plan has been unanimously received as a clear success on all levels. It has allowed us to avert famine, epidemics and serious malnutrition in children, pregnant women and nursing mothers. Even livestock epidemics have been averted, with losses being kept within reasonable limits.

Our Government is also working tirelessly to broaden access to education and to improve both the quality and quantity of teaching and to broaden health coverage throughout the nation. We have built a modern cancer hospital, which is among the best equipped in the region, and a cardiology hospital and a diabetes centre, not to mention the establishment of 50 dialysis centres. All of this was achieved in a record time of just over three years since the accession to power of

President Ould Abdel Aziz following the elections of 18 July 2009.

Our subregion, the Sahel, has been for some years a haven for organized crime networks of many types, from smuggling drugs, weapons and munitions to human trafficking, illegal immigration, hostage-taking and especially terrorism. Together they have led to the extremely serious situation currently unfolding in our friendly neighbour, Mali, whose northern regions in particular represent a serious threat to the security of the entire subregion.

Given those conditions, we are following developments in Mali with great concern. Reaffirming our deep commitment to the unity and territorial integrity of Mali, we hope that the international community, through the Security Council, will fully shoulder its responsibilities and take the necessary decisions, in consultation with the Government of Mali and neighbouring countries, with a view to achieving a swift solution that would ensure the re-establishment of State authority throughout the territory, a return to peaceful civil order for all of Mali's people and the complete and lasting eradication of terrorism and organized crime in northern Mali and the Sahel as a whole.

The Islamic Republic of Mauritania has steadfastly taken principled positions with regard to that tragic crisis. We swiftly condemned the military coup d'état that ousted the elected President and interrupted the electoral process. We have strenuously rejected separatist claims and unequivocally condemned the occupation of northern Mali by armed terrorist groups. We have continuously reaffirmed our commitment to the unity, territorial integrity and social cohesion of sisterly Mali.

My country swiftly and early took all appropriate measures to accept refugees from Mali. Today there are more than 110,000 in a camp that has become the second largest city in Mauritania in terms of population, after the capital Nouakchott. Despite the severe constraints linked to drought and the scarcity of financial resources, Mauritania is providing shelter to those refugees in satisfactory conditions that meet with the approval of international humanitarian agencies, including the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, with whom we work very closely and maintain constant contact.

My country is perfectly aware of the close relationship between security, development and democracy and of the fact that security is a necessary condition for development, for the establishment of democracy and for strengthening the institutions of the rule of law. We have therefore made the adoption of the necessary array of legislation a top priority and has committed to adopting measures to guarantee the security and safety of our citizens and of foreign nationals residing in our country among our hospitable, warm people. Our armed and security forces have resolutely and courageously faced criminal terrorist armed groups that have threatened our security and that of our guests. We have therefore been able to secure our borders and restore our sovereignty in each area of our country, and we now control all access points, despite the great length of our borders.

The Islamic Republic of Mauritania is most seriously following the dramatic developments of the situation in the sisterly Syrian Arab Republic. We call on all parties involved to put an end to the escalating violence and to focus on dialogue in order to find a peaceful solution to the crisis so that the brotherly Syrian people can avoid further horror, desolation and destruction, as well as to ensure the unity and territorial integrity of Syria and the cohesion of its social fabric. We have every hope that the mission of the Special Joint Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, whom my country fully supports, will be able to open the path to a positive solution to that crisis, which poses a serious threat to the peace and security of the entire Middle East and the entire world, with extremely negative effects on the Syrian economy.

We enthusiastically welcome the democratic changes that took place in Tunisia, Yemen, Egypt and Libya. We are convinced they will contribute to consolidating civil peace and security and will bring about a shining future for those fraternal countries and peoples.

We have the firm hope that the agreements recently reached between the Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan will lead to the peaceful settlement of all pending issues between those two States. My country is also wholly satisfied with the recent legislative and presidential elections in Somalia. We hope they will strengthen peace and security in that brotherly country, which has been devastated for two decades by the collapse of central power and by a number of other

difficulties, including the destruction of infrastructure and the displacement of its people, armed conflicts between warlords, and the activities of armed terrorist groups that have sown terror among innocent civilians.

My country is closely following the issue of Western Sahara. We reiterate our full support for the efforts of the Secretary-General and of his Special Envoy aimed at bringing about a lasting, comprehensive and fair solution that would have the consent of both parties and would serve to uphold peace and security in the region and thereby promote the establishment of a progressive, prosperous Arab Maghreb, which our people legitimately hope for.

The Israeli-Arab conflict is a permanent source of hatred and hostility and a serious threat to peace and security in a vital region of the world. The legal framework and the general conditions to address that situation have been defined and reiterated for a long time now, in a spate of resolutions in the Security Council and the General Assembly. That has all been formally confirmed via the Arab Peace Initiative, which is based on the principle of land for peace and which aims at resolving the ongoing conflict, Therefore we urge the international community to grant the request that Mahmoud Abbas, President of the Palestinian Authority, made in the last Assembly session, seeking the recognition of the Palestinian State by the international community, within the borders of 4 June 1967.

That is the only way to end the suffering of the Palestinian people, which has gone on for almost as long as this Organization has existed. It is also the way for the international community to shoulder its historic responsibility with respect to Palestine and the desire to achieve justice and to ensure credibility and equity between the two parties to the conflict, in compliance with the relevant resolutions of international legality. We also reiterate our condemnation of the standing embargo of the Gaza Strip and the crimes perpetrated by the Israeli war machine against Palestinian civilians, along with the massive destruction of their properties and infrastructure.

It is no longer acceptable that all those paths continue to be firmly closed off to an unarmed Palestinian people, who have been assigned to fictitious negotiations that are themselves an insurmountable obstacle to their achieving their most basic right, which is the establishment of their national independent State on the borders of 4 June 1967, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

Promoting a culture of peace and the values and spirit of tolerance among different peoples and civilizations and establishing equity and justice among and between peoples at a global level are the right ways to safeguard peace and security in our world. There are outstanding issues without any prospects for solution. There is a huge gap between rich and poor. There are imbalances in the global economic infrastructure and an absence of genuine justice, equity, and equality. All of those issues have contributed to the escalation of areas of tension and the expansion of the phenomenon of terrorism.

The Islamic Republic of Mauritania rejects terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. We are committed to our Islamic values, which require that we respect tolerance and fraternity and reject any form of extremism and violence. The international community urgently needs to study the reasons for extremism and the best ways to uproot and eradicate that problem.

The noble ideals by which the international community was guided during the creation of this Organization will be respected only if the States and peoples of the world can benefit from the potential of development to provide the conditions for a decent life for all human beings, especially in developing countries, while respecting the values of freedom and equity. That is how we will be able to achieve the values that are at the very basis of the United Nations.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Ali Ahmed Karti, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Sudan.

Mr. Karti (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, allow me to express our warm congratulations to Mr. Vuk Jeremić on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session.

I am confident that his experience will ensure the success of our meetings. I should like to commend his predecessor, Ambassador Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, and to express my appreciation and gratitude to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his efforts to strengthen the role of the United Nations. It is my hope that deliberations at this session will be successful, which would contribute to fulfilling the hopes and aspirations of the peoples of the world to a life of security, peace and stability, on the basis of the values

and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

We were pleased to see that the main theme for this session of the General Assembly relates to the peaceful settlement of disputes. That principle is a fundamental one, as the Charter of the United Nations stresses the need to maintain international peace and security by pacific means or through effective collective measures aimed at eliminating threats to international peace and security, in accordance with the Charter and international law.

The peaceful settlement of disputes requires joint efforts on the part of the international community in order to tackle the root causes of conflicts. We believe that the absence of sustainable and balanced development is one of the main reasons why a small minority of people have been able to appropriate the greatest wealth in the world while the vast majority of humankind lives in abject poverty, lacking all basic services. Greater efforts must therefore be made to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

Disseminating a culture of peace, tolerance, respect for others and the prevention of any violence or incitement to cultural, religious, sectarian or ethnic strife must be among the fundamental priorities and concerns of the United Nations. The Organization must ensure that no offensive statements about prophets are made under the pretext of freedom of expression. Perhaps the latest video insulting Prophet Muhammad and the reactions thereto are the best evidence of the seriousness of this issue and its effect on international peace and security.

My country suffered through a long conflict — more than six decades — that hampered the achievement of peace, development and stability, and had strong negative repercussions on the region. Proceeding from the conviction of my Government as to the need to put an end to that conflict, on the basis of United Nations instruments for the pacific settlement of disputes, difficult and thorny negotiations began that took over a decade and culminated in the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) under the auspices of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). Many regional and international partners helped in reaching that Agreement. The Government of the Sudan was committed to implementing the Agreement during the prescribed time frame, which led to the known referendum in which the people of South Sudan decided to secede.

The Government of the Sudan immediately recognized the Government of South Sudan and fully committed itself to assisting that nascent State, as was stated by the President of my country — Mr. Omer Hassan Al-Bashir — personally when the new State was born in the south. Despite all of the assistance provided by my country to facilitate the birth of the Republic of South Sudan, many obstacles have cropped up on the road to the normalization of relations between the two neighbourly countries. The delay in the drafting of important agreements provided for in the CPA following the referendum has led to many tensions, resulting in the adoption by the African Union Peace and Security Council of a road map in April 2012 and in Security Council resolution 2046 (2012), which stresses the spirit of the African Union decision.

We have begun a new phase of serious negotiations under the African Union High-level Implementation Panel, headed by President Thabo Mbeki, which led to the signing on 27 September in Addis Ababa of very important agreements on the economy, security and citizenship status in both States and a framework agreement for cooperation between the two countries in all fields. None of that would have taken place without the firm determination, wisdom and patience of my President, Omer Al-Bashir, who insisted on the need to resolve disputes by peaceful means, beginning with the signing of the CPA, the Abuja Agreement on Darfur, the agreement on Eastern Darfur and the Darfur Document. That has shown the world that Sudan's leadership acts on the basis of firm principles that prize security and stability and are aimed at achieving peace and development. We want everyone to know that the goal of attempts to distort Sudan's image and impugn its leadership is merely to defame us and that they are devoid of any substance.

We in the Sudan have been determined to address the reasons underlying war and strife despite the strong economic and political pressures brought to bear against my country and the unfair sanctions imposed by the United States of America. The Sudan requires assistance in order to traverse this very sensitive stage towards better horizons, and to that end we believe that the sanctions must be lifted, our debt cancelled and our economy supported.

The Sudan has repeatedly stressed its commitment to a policy of good-neighbourliness and is determined to strengthen its brotherly relations with South Sudan. The great achievements registered have brought an end to the longest war on the Africa continent. With the same determination, we have attempted to tackle the few remaining issues. In order to ensure continuing sincere cooperation with the Republic of South Sudan, on Thursday, 27 September 2012, an agreement was signed in the Ethiopian capital between the two Governments on security, the economy, borders, oil, trade, rates of exchange, pensions, debts and other economic issues. That is an important step that shows Sudan's commitment to a policy of good-neighbourliness and its determination to improve brotherly relations with South Sudan and to reach a comprehensive understanding on all issues.

Despite the fact that no agreement has been reached on the final status of Abyei, and no terms of reference have been found for its resolution, the Sudan stresses its full support for the Abyei protocol and agreement of June 2011, as well as the referendum law on Abyei signed by both parties in the Sudanese Parliament in 2010.

We must stress here the important role played by the two parties, with the mediation of the late Ethiopian Prime Minister, Mr. Meles Zenawi, and his successor, Mr. Hailemariam Desalegn, in the context of the presidency of IGAD, as well as by other international partners. Without those efforts, no agreement could have been reached or signed with South Sudan. We would therefore like to stress the importance of mediation and serious negotiations in resolving disputes by peaceful means.

Allow me also to stress the role of the international community in fulfilling its responsibility to help both parties and to keep all promises made following the signing of the CPA by providing assistance in funds and in kind for the development and growth of the Sudan and South Sudan.

In his statement, the Vice-President of South Sudan asserted that his country lays claim to Heglig and sympathizes with those bearing arms against us in South Kordofan and Blue Nile states (see A/67/PV.13). That is regrettable and goes outside the spirit of the agreement of Addis Ababa, taking us back to square one as far as conflicts are concerned. As I have said before, I sincerely hope that those words of the Vice-President were intended to be delivered to the General Assembly before the agreement was reached in Addis Ababa.

The Government of the Sudan calls on the international community to put further pressure on the rebels to stop attacks on South Kordofan and Blue Nile states. Let me also say that the Government of the Sudan will continue to live up to its responsibilities with respect to the protection of civilians and the completion of development projects. Blue Nile state is now home to the largest development project in the Sudan — the building of a dam — together with many other development projects.

The Government has a green-land policy designed to expand agricultural projects in South Kordofan and a policy to improve water quality and education and health services there. Moreover, proceeding from our belief that it is the fundamental responsibility of the Government to protect its citizens, we renew our commitment to the joint tripartite initiative between the United Nations, the African Union and the League of Arab States to bring humanitarian assistance to civilians in the regions controlled by rebels in South Kordofan and Blue Nile states.

Despite the efforts made by the Sudan to tackle the negative effects following the secession of the south, the burden of foreign debt weighs very heavily on the Sudanese economy. Let me take this opportunity to recall the pledges of the international community, following the signing of the CPA, to cancel the Sudan's debts. Those promises have gone unmet. I am sure the Assembly knows that the issue of debts was among the fundamental questions that were discussed with the Government of South Sudan. Based on the zero-option approach, we are determined to work with our brothers in the Government of South Sudan to take the steps agreed upon with the international community and our creditors so that we both may enjoy the fruits of peace and ensure the viability of the two States.

At the same time, we stress the need to lift the coercive unilateral sanctions imposed on the Sudan, which run counter to General Assembly resolutions and international norms and laws. At this point, we cannot fail to mention the progress made in sustainable development in Africa or the fact that such progress has not risen to the ambitious level of the objectives set forth in the Millennium Development Goals. International cooperation and effective partnerships are thus required, in the form of the complete cancellation of debts, in accordance with the Debt Initiative for

Heavily Indebted Poor Countries, if we are to fulfil our commitments and build national capacities.

My country is also witnessing another important development — the signing of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur, following the peace negotiations that took place under the auspices of the State of Qatar. I should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Qatar and His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani for their much-appreciated efforts on behalf of peace and stability in Darfur. The Doha Document has been widely accepted and supported by the people of Darfur and the regional and international communities. With that instrument, we have turned a new page in the book on Darfur — towards stability, development, peace and the return of displaced persons — after closing the chapter on fighting.

We call on the international community to protect and secure the peace by countering the armed rebel groups that have refused to join the peace process. We further call on the Security Council to put pressure on those movements in order to compel them to subscribe to the Doha Document. I would also appeal to the international community to effectively participate in the donors' conference for the rebuilding of Darfur to be held in December in Doha.

The Government of the Sudan will continue to implement its five-point strategy for Darfur's development. We shall give the utmost priority to the return of displaced persons and refugees, in coordination with the regional body that was set up pursuant to the Doha agreement. The parties have begun to fulfil their duties in implementing the Doha peace agreement, and now the five provinces of Darfur are enjoying security, stability and a return to normality.

That, in turn, has led the Security Council to reduce the number of military contingents in the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur, because, as expected, there has been a general improvement in both the security and the humanitarian situations. That improvement crowned with success the many efforts made by the Government of the Sudan, paved the way for launching development projects in Darfur and facilitated the return of displaced persons and refugees to their homes and villages to resettle and re-engage in production and development.

The current session is being held while the world is witnessing many varied and intertwined changes and developments. Those require cooperation and coordination between members of the international community for the good of humankind. We must make sure that the reform of the United Nations and its principal and subsidiary bodies is given the importance it deserves. It has now become necessary to accelerate the reform of the Organization so that it can undertake its role in a just, transparent and effective manner and confront the challenges that the world faces. Indeed, the reform will not be genuine unless the General Assembly can play its full role in a balanced and transparent manner.

The reform of the Security Council is a fundamental part of the reform of the United Nations. The Council no longer reflects the realities of today's world. Unless its membership is enlarged, unless working methods and procedures are reformed, and unless its decisions are taken in a more democratic and transparent way, reform will not be comprehensive but will merely be partial or transitional. We call today for a more balanced, multilateral and just international system. What is needed is a system able to tackle the challenges that we face, one in which respect for international law prevails, in which the primary rules are the purposes and principles of the United Nations, including respect for the sovereignty of States, non-intervention in their internal affairs for any ostensible reason and the non-use or threat of force.

The Sudan is greatly concerned about new concepts and agendas that are not internationally agreed, controversial concepts such as humanitarian intervention, preventive wars, the responsibility to protect, political and economic sanctions and new mechanisms to bring pressure to bear on States, politicizing international justice. In this context, the Sudan refuses and rejects the approach taken by the so-called International Criminal Court. That body has gone beyond the boundaries set for it at its founding Rome Conference. Regrettably, it is now a political tool that criminalizes entire States, while fully ignoring heinous crimes being perpetrated by other States in the name of humanity and the fight against terrorism. Rejection of the request of the Palestinian Authority by the Court is clear evidence of injustice in the name of law and a good example of the politicization of justice.

The phenomenon of climate change corroborates what we have already said. The problems associated with it have grown ever greater and States cannot tackle them on their own. That is the case too for many other issues, such as energy, food security, immigration and

terrorism. We therefore believe in the need to strengthen international cooperation on climate change, based on the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Kyoto Protocol.

We commend the State of Brazil for hosting the Conference on Sustainable Development in July and for the effective role it played in reaching agreement on its final document (resolution 66/288, annex). That outcome reflects the fundamental concerns of Member States, stresses the promotion of international cooperation for sustainable development through a green economy and strengthens the institutional framework for sustainable development. We hope that the implementation of the concept of the green economy will take into account the differences between developed and developing countries, so that all may implement their own green policies, and will ensure the flow of financial, technical and technological assistance to developing countries without discrimination.

My delegation condemns all forms and manifestations of terrorism, whether perpetrated by individuals, groups or States. Terrorism is a phenomenon that is not linked to any one religion, culture or State. We also renew the call for an internationally agreed definition of terrorism, since terrorism is a grave threat to all our societies. We must not confuse the concept of terrorism with that of legitimate struggle against foreign occupation, invasion or colonialism. We also reject the stigma of terrorism currently being attached to particular cultures, groups, religions or ethnicities. Measures taken to fight terrorism must not infringe on public freedoms, human rights or a State's sovereignty over its territory.

The current session of the General Assembly coincides with some important indicators in the international economy. First and foremost are the consequences of the world financial crisis and the escalation in the price of staples, particularly food staples, and their effect on sustainable development. Despite that, the Government of the Sudan is making major efforts to realize economic and social development in the country, in the belief that that can only come about through realizing peace and security and growth. That was reflected in the Sudan's commitment to implementing the objectives of the long-term national strategy for 2007-2013 and our Poverty Reduction Strategy.

The question of Palestine has been on the agenda of the United Nations for more than six decades. Our Organization has adopted countless resolutions that were rejected or remained unimplemented by Israel. Israel continues to defy the will of the international community. The Sudan expresses its full support for the decision by the Palestinian Authority to seek membership in the United Nations. It is their legal right, based on the right to self-determination, one of the fundamental principles of international law.

The situation in the Middle East continues to be a threat to international peace and security, despite continuing declarations by the Arab side of their wish to reach a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the region, based on the relevant United Nations resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative. However, Israel, the occupying Power, continues to reject the option of peace. It continues its inhuman, unjust siege, which is in contravention of international law. It also continues its plans for colonialist settlement. It continues to try to change the demographic character of Al-Quds Al-Sharif by demolishing homes, uprooting trees and engaging in ethnic cleansing and coercive displacement, as well as detaining thousands of Palestinians.

We renew our call on the United Nations, and the Security Council in particular, to shoulder their responsibility for maintaining international peace and security and to take the requisite measures to end Israeli occupation of Arab and Palestinian land. From this rostrum, we renew our call for the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. Meanwhile, we also underline the right of States to obtain nuclear technology for peaceful uses, and we call for the resolution of disputes through negotiations and dialogue, free from attempts to spread fear and tension in the region.

Also with regard to the Middle East, my delegation expresses its deep sadness and regret at the current developments in Syria. There has been an escalation of violence and an excessive use of force. That is not the right way to resolve the disputes. From this rostrum, we call on all parties to heed the voice of reason, to enter into negotiations and to cease hostilities and military confrontation. We believe that the appointment of the new Joint Special Representative, Lakhdar Brahimi, to the region is a good opportunity to continue to seek a peaceful settlement to the dispute, and we hope that all parties will cooperate with him, to protect Syria and its social fabric.

The Sudan welcomes the latest political developments in Somalia, notably its recent successful

presidential elections. We congratulate the new President, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, and we wish him every success in promoting peace and security in Somalia. In this context, the Sudan commends the African Union for its efforts in Somalia. We call on the international community to support those efforts and to stand shoulder to shoulder with the fraternal Somali people at this critical juncture in the country's history. We want Somalia to resume its natural role within the international community.

In conclusion, let me express our sincere good wishes for a successful session under the wise leadership of President Vuk Jeremić.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Rimbink Pato, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Trade and Immigration of Papua New Guinea.

Mr. Pato (Papua New Guinea): Papua New Guinea congratulates Mr. Jeremić on his recent election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. Our country pledges its support to him in that role. I also commend his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, for the valuable work that he has done in the past year.

Papua New Guinea recently celebrated its 37 years of independence, on 16 September. Prior to that, despite various challenges, our country successfully completed its general elections in a fair and peaceful manner. Those elections culminated in the convening of our ninth National Parliament and the formation of a new Government. We thank our close friends and development partners that have assisted us in the election process, including Australia, New Zealand, Japan, South Korea, China, the United States, Great Britain, the European Union, the United Nations and the Commonwealth.

As a young developing nation, we are proud of our Constitution-based and evolving democracy. While our people have subsisted on the island nation of Papua New Guinea for many centuries, our short modern history continues to be a testament to the will of our people to maintain and consolidate our burgeoning democracy in line with the rule of law. In today's world, that is the basis on which a just and fair society is built and on which societies have been built.

Papua New Guinea's key development priorities in the next five years are contained in our Medium-Term Development Plan 2011-2015. That seeks to achieve a long-term national road map under our Vision 2050. We need to strengthen our economy for it to be more resilient to global market shocks by diversifying trade and investment and by reviewing development cooperation, ensuring that our people's basic needs are met.

Papua New Guinea is also increasing investment in our children's future, security and success by the provision of free and quality education from the elementary to the secondary level and by further subsidizing education from Grade 12 to the tertiary level. We believe that that will help us to achieve Millennium Development Goal 2 on universal primary education, which will enhance our nation-building process.

We are also rehabilitating and developing our major infrastructure, such as roads, airports, ports, schools and hospitals, as key drivers of sustainable development in our country. We are increasing support for funding to ensure the delivery of basic health-care and social services countrywide. That includes the revitalization of our institutional and human resources capacity to take the country to a higher development level, which is our national development priority.

Our Government has prioritized combating corruption at all levels of society. In doing so, we have adopted the principle of zero tolerance. In that respect, our country is setting up the Independent Commission against Corruption to enhance implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption. We believe that such legislation and policy efforts will improve good governance, resulting in the effective delivery of basic services and the provision of access to opportunities for participation in national development by all relevant stakeholders.

The economy of Papua New Guinea is growing at an annual rate of 8 per cent. Our improved economic performance is underscored by political stability, sound macroeconomic management and the development of the first large liquefied natural gas project. The revenue from that project is likely to increase the growth of our economy, doubling the revenue base by 2014. We intend to share that wealth with our Pacific neighbours in the appropriate manner. In that context, a sovereign wealth fund has been set up to professionally manage the revenue from the liquefied natural gas project and other extractive industries. We plan to reinvest that revenue for the future of our country.

We believe that a strengthened economy will improve our social indicators, particularly by addressing our literacy levels, high maternal and infant mortality rates, law and order enforcement, the ageing public sector workforce and the declining state of our country's infrastructure.

Papua New Guinea supports the Secretary-General's five-year action agenda on sustainable development, enhanced human security, enhancing the core values of the international community, supporting nations in transition, and working with and for women and young people, which was launched on 25 January. Papua New Guinea continues to benefit from a strong United Nations presence, through which various development programmes have been implemented. We highly value the contribution of the United Nations in that regard.

We have also been implementing the One United Nations initiative since 2006 as a self-starter country. So far, that is working exceptionally well for our country. We are also grateful that the United Nations has heeded our call and has synergized its development assistance framework 2012-2015 with our Medium-Term Development Plan. However, we can do more. We urge donor partners to abide by the principles of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action. Through the Pacific Islands Forum, we have adapted the Cairns Compact in order to better coordinate development assistance and to ensure the effective delivery of aid.

We welcome the proactive engagement of the United Nations with the Pacific region and thank the Secretary-General for his visit and ongoing commitment. We are encouraged by that and by the fact that contacts with the United Nations system and personnel will be strengthened in the Pacific Islands region.

The challenge for Papua New Guinea is to ensure that the development of our natural resources is sustainable and that the benefits are effectively translated into the improved livelihoods of our people. That, in turn, will assist us in meeting our Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), especially the 22 indicators and 90 national targets that we have set ourselves. We acknowledge that it will be a challenge to attain all the MDGs by 2015, but note there has been measured progress in the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, which is MDG 1, and the reduction of child mortality, which is MDG 4. So for our part, our country is taking full ownership of the MDGs.

With the support of our development partners such as the European Union and the United Nations, Papua New Guinea is conducting a trial of the Millennium Village concept this month. We recommit ourselves to working with our international partners, including the United Nations, and we reiterate that the MDGs need to be the priority while we discuss sustainable development goals for the long term.

Papua New Guinea continues to scale up its efforts to further strengthen human rights protection and advancement in the country. We are working closely with United Nations agencies and our other development partners in the furtherance of these objectives. To date, we have reported to the Human Rights Council on work done relating to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in July 2010. We have also reported to the Human Rights Council under the universal periodic review process. Additionally, the 2012 report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences (A/HRC/20/16) and the 2010 report of the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment are being considered by our Government this year.

Papua New Guinea is committed to gender empowerment and equality. We recognize women and girls as not only key national development partners but also persons whose inherent human dignity must be respected and safeguarded. This is a central pillar of our Constitution and a core value of our national development road map. A testament to the success of this measure is that more girls are enrolling in primary and upper levels of education with an increasingly high retention rate. Women are also increasingly employed, recognized and given greater responsibilities in our public and private sectors. In fact, we achieved a historical milestone this year, and one which is unprecedented in our political history, in that, for the first time, three women were elected to the national parliament. This positive trend is increasing in our country at all levels.

We also recognize the critical importance of protecting our women and girls from violence and discrimination. Papua New Guinea is taking a proactive approach through education, advocacy and legislation to prevent gender-based violence. We

have made violence against women and girls a crime punishable by law. Partnership with all stakeholders, including our development partners and civil society, forms an important part of the gender empowerment and equality issues in our country. In this context, we commend the funding, substantially from the Australian Government, that was announced at the margins of the Pacific Islands Forum in Rarotonga in August 2012, as well as that from other development partners, including New Zealand, the United Nations and the United States of America.

Having acceded to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Papua New Guinea is now in the process of ratifying the Convention. Our country is working with our Pacific Islands Forum member States to host the Pacific Islands Forum Disability Ministers Meeting on 3 and 4 October 2012 in Port Moresby.

We are also working towards setting up an independent national human rights commission and, at the same time, we are in the process of withdrawing the seven reservations on the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. In this context, we are partnering with Australia to address human trafficking and human smuggling issues in our region.

The theme that was chosen for the High-level Meeting during this session, the rule of law at the national and international levels, is timely and commendable. Papua New Guinea fully subscribes, as I have said, to the principles of the rule of law.

Papua New Guinea also fully subscribes to disarmament and non-proliferation to secure a peaceful world. We urge nuclear nations to denuclearize and those thinking of going nuclear to refrain from doing so. The Pacific region remains a nuclear-free zone, and we urge other Member States that have yet to sign and ratify the Rarotonga Treaty, which prohibits nuclear weapons in the region, to do so.

We remain concerned about the continued proliferation of small arms and light weapons. In this context, we call for the recent impasse on the negotiations on a global arms trade treaty to be ended as soon as possible.

Papua New Guinea supports the Group of Seven Plus forum for its efforts to strengthen peacebuilding and State-building in fragile and post-conflict countries and commend Timor-Leste for their leadership. As part of our national commitment to fostering global peace and security, Papua New Guinea has commenced its contribution to the United Nations peacekeeping force and is looking to expand that contribution.

We remain committed to the United Nations sustainable development agenda, especially on climate change, with respect to mitigation and adaptation. We are committed to working closely with the global community under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and subscribe to the Rio+20 outcome declaration, "The future we want" (resolution 66/288, annex).

Papua New Guinea recognizes the pivotal role of the Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI) for sustainable development. As a founding member of GGGI, Papua New Guinea pledges to work together with other stakeholders to ensure the desired outcomes through the Institute. In this context, we pay tribute to the work that has been done by the Republic of Korea.

In conclusion, we support the call made by the Secretary-General for the reform of the United Nations system. We also again call for the reform of the Security Council in both the permanent and the non-permanent categories of members, in order for it to reflect the geopolitical realities of today.

The meeting rose at 2.30 p.m.